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*The*  
JOURNAL  
*of a*  
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WIFE



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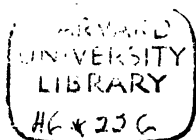


# **The Journal of a Neglected Wife**

**By  
Mabel Herbert Urner**

**New York  
B. W. Dodge & Company  
1909**

KE9650



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# THE JOURNAL OF A NEGLECTED WIFE

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## CHAPTER I

April 15th

Is he with her again to-night? Since ten o'clock I have been watching at the library window. I try to sit quietly in my room and read or sew, but in a few moments I find myself back at the window, gazing down the street, hoping breathlessly that each coming figure will be he. And then always my heart sinks sickeningly when the street-lamp at the corner shows it to be some passing stranger. And yet how little difference it makes whether he comes now or an hour later! I feel that he is with her—that he has been with her all evening. It always brings that sickening weight in my chest,



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and a trembling weakness like that of fright.

April 18th

How much longer can I bear this? If only I could go to some one for advice or help—to be able to unburden it all! But that is impossible. How can I confess to any one that for over a year my husband has been infatuated with another woman? It would only add to my sense of degradation to know that any one shared my secret.

April 21st

I feel sure that he has not seen her for several days. I am happier and more hopeful than I have been for weeks.

April 22d

At dinner he asked if I would not like to go to the theater. There was a note almost of apology in his voice, as though there had come to him a sudden realization of how rarely he had taken me anywhere of late. But I felt that one of our old

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home evenings might bring us nearer than any theater. So after dinner he read to me as he used to do. I have always loved our library, the dark woodwork, the soft rich colors of the hangings and rugs. And to-night, as he sat beside the shaded light, with the gas logs sending flickering shadows over the room, I had some of the old feeling of pride and security in my home. Surely no other woman could permanently come between my husband and his home. I am sure he has not seen her now for over a week. And yet I am almost afraid to hope. . . .

April 25th

He was with her again last night. He said he was detained at a stockholders' meeting. But I know—I *know*! What shall I do? Have I the strength to bear it?

April 27th

My worst fears are verified. Oh, Horace, Horace, how can you degrade me

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so? How can you come home reeking with another woman's perfume? What have I ever done that I must bear such humiliation? And I must bear it in silence—I must pretend to be blind. *Once he knows that I know* I would have to leave him. If there is in me any vestige of womanly pride I could not continue to live with him and tacitly consent to be daily dishonored. And I have not the courage to leave him—to face life alone. Before that thought my mind cowers in sickening fear.

It was almost dawn this morning when, after a sleepless night, I went into the bath-room for some bromide. The door that led into his room was partly open. I could see that he was asleep, his face turned from me, one arm thrown over his head. His coat hung on a chair near by. [The desire to *touch* it, to breathe in the faint fragrance of cigars that I knew it would hold, to comfort my poor starved soul with at least this semblance of near-

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ness to him, made me stoop over, lift the coat from the chair and bury my face against it. And then! Oh, the sickening knowledge that came to me then! From the arm and shoulder of the coat came a faint perfume, elusive, subtle, and yet unmistakably a perfume. . . .

He had held her in his arms! On the shoulder where her head had rested was the odor most perceptible. It was true, then. I held in my hands the proof of his unfaithfulness. I never realized before how much I had hoped against hope; how in spite of all evidence I had clung to the hope that I *might* be wrong—that it might be only friendship. But now——

April 28th

Sometimes I feel that I would have suffered less if he had died.

April 30th

In what way have I failed him? What can this other woman give that I cannot?

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I have gone back over the fifteen years of our marriage. What is lacking in me that I have not held the love of my husband?

May 1st

It is a perfect spring morning. The soft air blows inward the white curtains of my bedroom, bringing in the noises of spring from the street—the pedler's cry of "fresh fruits and vegetables," the tinkle of a distant hand-organ, and the shrill cries of children. From somewhere come the sound of hammering and the smell of paint—a suggestion of building—a familiar note of spring; one can almost breathe in the odor of newly cut lumber. The sunlight is dazzling, and the tree before our house is a-flutter with chirping sparrows. Everything seems teeming with the possibilities of life—new life. And yet how old and worn and faded I feel in all this fresh spring brightness! I can understand now how spring can be the saddest season of the year for those

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who are old and hopeless. It is the season of youth, of hope, of expectancy. And I—I belong to the fall, with its fading, withering leaves. I am filled with bitterness and rebellion. I want to shut it all out—all the sunlight and joy. If I could, I would make it a dark, bleak day in fall—the fall that is symbolic of decay, the withering and dying out of all things.

May 3d

If I could feel that she was some ordinary woman of the chorus-girl type, however keen the humiliation might be, I would still feel that it was an infatuation that would not last. But I know he could never care for a woman of that kind. He could never overcome his innate loathing of all that is coarse and vulgar. Whoever she is, she must be, outwardly at least, a refined woman, a gentlewoman. I spend anguished hours in wondering what she is like, in trying to picture her. I have no clue except that one unsigned note I

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found last winter, and now this elusive perfume. . . .

May 8th

I dread this summer so. The thought of going to the seashore, of having Horace come out only about twice a week, and all the rest of the time not knowing where he is—feeling that he may be with *her*—how can I go through that? And yet I cannot stay in town all summer. I never have before; it would seem so strange. A jealous, suspicious, watchful wife—oh, I do not want to become that! At whatever cost, I must go away as usual—for a few weeks, at least.

May 9th

Every day he is growing farther and farther away from me. He is hardly ever at home now. And he has almost ceased to make excuses for his absence.

May 10th

The thought that many other wives have to endure all this, and perhaps more, does

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not help me. He has always seemed so much a part of me, so different from the men that figure in newspaper scandals of intrigues and divorce.

May 15th

At breakfast Horace said something about what plans I had thought of for the summer. I said as long as it remained this cool, it seemed just about as comfortable here, but I supposed later on we would go to the Sea Cliff Hotel at South Hampton, where we were last summer, unless he had something else to suggest. He said he thought South Hampton was as accessible as any place we had ever been, and that we would probably be as well satisfied there as anywhere. And that was all that was said—we made no plans or decided on no date.

How different from other years, when we enjoyed planning and talking it over weeks ahead, when we looked forward with such pleasure to our outings together. But now everything seems strained and



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forced. Oh, Horace, how few interests we have come to have in common—how fast you are drifting away from me!

May 18th

I was straightening up some books and magazines in the library this morning. Under some papers on Horace's desk I found a large, heavy envelope with the crest and name of a well-known photographer. It was not sealed, and I drew out the photograph. It was a picture of Horace. The likeness was perfect—the poise of head, the clear, dark eyes, the stern mouth, the wavy hair pushed carelessly off the forehead.

At first I was filled with joy; he had no recent pictures, and I had so long wanted him to have some taken. And now this was so marvelously real—so much better than any he ever had before. And then as other thoughts rushed suddenly upon me, they brought that faint, sick feeling. . . .

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It was for *her* he had had them taken. To me he had not even mentioned them; it was only by chance I found this one. Again I looked at the photographer's signature; it was that of a famous artist; the picture was exquisitely finished, a dark platinum print on a heavy gray mounting.

I slipped it back into the envelope and left it on the desk. No, I would not keep it. I would not have him give me one merely because he must.

May 19th

I had determined not to speak about that photograph. And yet to-night at dinner I did; I seemed powerless to keep back the words. If I had only said frankly that I had found the photograph and wondered why he had not spoken of it, that would not have been so bad. But the thing I did say was so tactless—it showed so plainly my suspicions. It was just before we left the table, when I asked abruptly:

“Have we reached the stage where you

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do not trouble even to tell me when you have some pictures taken?"

I saw his face change instantly. It was several seconds before he looked up, and then he said slowly:

"I am sorry, Mary, but I have been very busy and absent-minded lately." There was a pause, and then he added: "I had them taken for the Lawyers' Association; they are bringing out an illustrated directory."

There was another pause, and then:

"I think there is one upstairs now in the library, if you care to have it."

"Yes, there is one up there," I answered coldly. "That is where I saw it."

Ellen came in with the coffee then, and nothing more was said. I did not say I wanted the picture, nor did he mention it again. But this morning I found it in my room on the dressing-table.

"For the Lawyers' Association"! No doubt they will publish one, but I cannot believe that is why he had them taken.

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I know that often his picture has been requested for similar purposes, and he has never bothered to comply. And now—now I feel that these were taken for her. And I believe if I had not found this one he would never have mentioned them to me.

May 24th

Oh, what a pitiful thing it is to depend so completely on any one person for happiness! Had I only the courage to go away—to leave him a note saying that if he loves this other woman I want him to be with her. In desperate moments I have planned this note over and over again. But I have not the strength. He has made up my life for so long. To give him up now would be like tearing my very soul apart.

And even if I could force myself to go away, how could I live? I hate this thought, and yet it is often in my mind now. I have not enough money of my

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own, and if he were living with another woman I could not take money from him. My whole nature would revolt at that.

What work could I do that would earn my living? Lately I have been taking the newspaper to my room, and with a sick heart searching the help columns! But it is always young women that are wanted, women of eighteen to thirty—not women of forty-five. And even if it were not for the age—how few things I could do! I know nothing of stenography, type-writing, bookkeeping, and these are the things that are wanted. What *could* I do? How could I live? I loathe myself for even thinking of this phase of it—and yet, how can I help it?

May 26th

This trembling, nervous, frightened feeling that I have had so much lately became almost unendurable to-day. Even Horace noticed at breakfast how pale I was, and how my hand trembled as I held my cup. He said he would stop at Dr.

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Martin's on his way downtown and have him come to see me. I am afraid of Dr. Martin's keen eyes, so I tried to persuade Horace not to send him. But he insisted; said I had not looked well for several days. *For several days!* Oh, my dear husband, how blind you have been! You have not seen that for months I have been sick—sick with a broken heart, the most horrible sickness a woman can have.

May 28th

Dr. Martin came yesterday. I answered his questions vaguely, tried to make light of it, said I was merely a little nervous and unstrung. But he waived all my evasions and asked bluntly:

"Mrs. Kennedy, what is worrying you?"

At that I burst into tears—hysterical tears. I could not help it. He was very kind, and did not press me with questions. Perhaps he knew it would be useless. He left a "tonic," and said he would call again. I wonder what he thinks? He sees so much

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of life. And yet he has known Horace and me for so long; there has always been such a quiet dignity about our home and our life.

For a moment the longing to confide in him was very strong. The relief it would be to tell some one of this misery—to unburden my heart of it all! But afterward, to know that any one shared my secret would only deepen my degradation. I must go on bearing it alone.

May 31st

This morning I happened to go into his room before the maid had straightened it. He had been shaving; the odor of bay rum was still in the room. The bed was just as he had left it—the covers thrown back, showing the impression of where he had lain. I threw myself down, kissing passionately the pillow and the sheet, trying to believe they still held some of the dear warmth of his body. Closer and closer I pressed my face against the pil-

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low where his head had been, to which clung the faint odor of his hair. Oh, how starved I was for this! How often, when he used to lie asleep beside me, have I crept nearer to him just to breathe that fragrance of his hair!

One reads of the allurements, the sensuousness, the intoxication of certain perfumes. Can any distilled manufactured essence be so wonderful as the faint flesh odors of the man you love?

When I rose from that bed it was as though I had been drinking wine—some rare sweet wine that thrilled me through and through. I caught up his silver hair-brushes from the chiffonier and pressed them against my cheek. I wanted more—more—to steep myself deeper in that intoxicating odor of himself. It seemed to bring him nearer to me—nearer than he had been for months.

And then I moved around the room, touching everything that belonged to him—everything seemed charged with the



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wonder of his personality. Later, when the maid came up, I sent her away. I was filled with an unreasoning jealousy, a resentment of her intimacy with his room, his clothes. I resolved that hereafter I alone would care for them.

June 2d

I have been looking in the mirror at my worn, lined face. The tragedy of age for a woman! When the years take from her youth and beauty, why do they not take, too, her longing for love? Why do they mercilessly leave her with a young heart and a faded face?

## CHAPTER II

SEA CLIFF HOTEL, June 10th

THE heat became so intolerable last week that there was no longer any excuse for remaining in town. Horace came out with me Friday and stayed until this morning. We were together more in these three days than we have been for months, but that strained consciousness was always between us. I found myself continually striving to make things more natural, and only succeeded in making them more constrained. I could feel Horace's disquietude and anxiety to return, even though he was careful not to show it in any way.

This morning when he left I think I felt something like relief—relief that I could relax, that I need no longer strain to be cheerful and natural, to struggle

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against the blank silence that seemed always to hover over us.

But he had been gone only a few hours when I began to long for him again, to feel that I had managed things badly, to think of what I might have said and done that would have brought us nearer. I am filled with a miserable sense of failure; in these three days I had a chance to be very near him, and I failed to use it wisely. And now I am anguishing over my lost opportunity.

He will be back Saturday to stay until Monday. Can I make it different then, or as soon as I see him will some restraint come upon me and make me dumb, or give a fatal self-consciousness to everything I say or do?

June 11th

I have not realized until to-day how completely I have isolated myself from every one in the past six or eight months. I have never entertained or gone out extensively; my home and Horace have al-

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ways filled my life. And yet we have a very pleasant circle of friends, with whom, until this year, I have kept in touch socially.

But now by not returning calls, by repeatedly sending regrets to invitations for luncheons and teas, I have gradually withdrawn from it all. I did not do this consciously—each time I would think: “I haven’t the heart to go this week—perhaps next week I will feel different.” But next week the thought of any social exertion would be just as distasteful.

How abrupt and discourteous in many instances this must have seemed I did not consider until to-day, when Mrs. Hammond and her daughter entered the dining-room and passed my table with the most formal greetings. Then I remembered two calls and a dinner invitation that I fear I did not even acknowledge. They are nice people, whom we have met here for two summers. After breakfast I joined them on the veranda, and told Mrs.

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Hammond that I had been ill much of the winter, and apologized for my really unpardonable delinquency. She was very pleasant, and we talked for quite a while; but except when she spoke of her husband and children I was not interested.

Later, when I walked down by the beach alone, I realized more than ever before how much I have changed. The things that used to interest me seem now empty and meaningless. I have but one line of thought—always of *her*. It has become an obsession.

Has Horace grown wholly indifferent to me that he does not see how I have withdrawn from everything? Does he not see that not only has our life together changed, but that I have no other life—no other interests at all now?

June 12th

After luncheon I took some magazines down to the beach and stayed there until dusk. But I did not read; all through the long sunny afternoon I gazed dreamily

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out over the blue stretch of sea to the far horizon dotted with tiny white sails. There was no surf; only a soft lapping of small waves broke the warm, brooding stillness.

Always the sea has rested me, but never before have I so needed the quieting peace and serenity that came to me to-day. For a few hours I was granted a respite from the torturing thoughts of all these months, a sense of detachment from all things except the influences about me—the warmth, the sunny silence, the deep blue and mysterious immensity of the sea, the atmosphere of tranquillity that was over it all.

June 13th

I am restless and anxious again. I have been down to the beach hoping the sea would have the same soothing effect of yesterday. But the waves were higher to-day; there was a turbulent note in their depths as they foamed against the shore. A large excursion steamer was passing with its brass band, its waving flags and

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crowded decks. The whole atmosphere was different. I returned to the hotel with a bitter sense of disappointment. Why is it that one can never *go back*—can never live over again even the impressions of an hour?

*Later*

I have cut this sketch from a current magazine and am pasting it here. I want to keep it—to have it remind me that some marriages hold greater unhappiness than mine:

### THE LETTER WRITTEN AND THE LETTER SENT

#### THE ONE THAT WAS WRITTEN

I am going to write you the truth. The truth that for five years I have hid with lies and deceit and trickery. I hate you—I hate you—I *loathe* you. Oh, what a relief it is to say it, to write it, to put it into words. Sometimes I have felt that I must shriek it out to you. But I haven't—oh, no, instead I have smiled and said nice little things, loving little things. How I have fooled you! That has been my one compensation, it has been to me a fiendish joy—the

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thought that I have fooled you so completely—you, who pride yourself on your discernment, your penetration, your keen insight and knowledge of women. How I have gloated over this and longed for the time when I might hurl it at you, and you would know how you have been fooled and duped and tricked by a woman—the woman who is your wife. Oh, yes, I married you willingly enough. I was not eighteen and had seen no other men. I thought you very great and strong and noble, and was proud and happy that you should care for me.

And now—now, when I look into my heart at the blackness and bitterness and wretchedness there—I smile grimly and think of the girl of five years ago. No, I don't shudder and weep; I did at first, but I have passed that now.

I remember just before the wedding ceremony I ran up to my own room, the room where all the beautiful dream-life of my girlhood had been spent, and I knelt by the bed and thanked God that this great happiness had come to me, and vowed a little vow that all my life I would strive to be worthy of it. Worthy of it! *Worthy* of it! It is only lately that I have developed a sense of humor. For a long time I failed to see in it any humor. But I do now; it is really very funny if you know how to look at



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it. Sometimes I feel an infinite pity for that girl, that innocent, ignorant girl that was once myself. But more often it is a boundless contempt for the girl who was such a little fool.

I have played my part well. You have never dreamed that I have hated and loathed you with an intensity that few women could feel.

When you read this, your first thought will be that I have loved some one else. To you that will seem the only explanation possible, the only one that you could understand. But I have loved no one. I have been absolutely true to you. Not from any sense of right or duty or loyalty—for I have had none; but simply because my hatred for you has so consumed me that I have had thought for nothing else.

They say that suffering softens and ennobles, that it makes one more kindly and gentle and humane. That is a lie. Instead it hardens and embitters and degrades.

Last month when you telegraphed from Detroit that the case was settled and you were returning at once, instead of staying the ten days you planned, I tore that message into strips and I swore—*swore*. I had been cheated out of ten days of freedom, of release from you, and the strange words came with amazing ease. It was not until afterward that I realized

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what I had said, and then I felt no regret, only a grim sense of humor.

Sometimes I have stood before my mirror in wonder that the slight, delicately refined woman reflected there should be the woman I know her to be.

And now—I am going away. I could shriek aloud with joy when I think that I shall never see you again—your hands, your voice, the way you walk, each individual thing about you which I hate with an individual hate.

What shall I do? How shall I support myself? I do not know. My accomplishments are not of the bread-winning kind, and yet I shall manage somehow. I can scheme and lie and deceive with the greatest ease and proficiency. Oh, yes, I have learned a number of useful if not admirable traits, and I shall not hesitate to use them. The girl of five years ago would probably have starved; the woman I am now will not starve.

I shall leave this on the pin-cushion. That is the proper place, is it not? And when you read it you must turn deathly white, clutch at a chair and cry, "My God!" With your florid complexion you may have some difficulty in turning white, but then you can try. It would add much to the effect.

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THE ONE THAT WAS SENT

*Thursday Morning*

DEAR JOHN—I am sending by express the heavy underwear and that old shooting jacket you wrote for. I am glad that game is so plentiful there, but am sorry your rheumatism is worse. You had better get that prescription filled that Dr. Brown gave you last winter; it helped you almost at once.

Of course, I am disappointed that you are going to stay another week, for you know I miss you dreadfully. But then you really need the rest, and I am sure it will do you good. So do not hurry back.

I telephoned down to the office this morning, and told them to continue forwarding your mail. I will write you again to-morrow.

Your loving wife,

KATHERINE.

This is more ghastly than anything I have ever known. For a woman to live with a man she *loathes*, even though in a way he may care for her, is more hideous than to live with a man she *loves*, though his love for her has ceased.

In the last there is always the hope, the

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possibility that she may win back his love. In the first there is nothing—nothing but debasing horror and repulsion. “. . . your hands, your voice, the way you walk—each individual thing about you which I hate with an individual hate.”

Oh, it must be unspeakable degradation for any woman to live in the intimacy of marriage with a man for whom she feels such physical repulsion!

June 14th

Horace comes to-morrow at five! I am filled with the hope that these two days here alone will bring us a little nearer together. Just the fact of his coming out to spend the week-end with me as he has done so many summers makes things seem more as they used to be. It has given me a feeling almost of assurance—of confidence. Just now the menace of this woman does not seem quite so strong, quite so *real*. For after all he *is* coming out to me as he always has. Surely that means a great deal.

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June 15th

Horace is here. I went down to the station to meet the five train. It was a few moments late, and as I waited my heart beat fast with hopes, plans, resolutions. I would greet him as I always used to—I would crush down this reticence, this restraint that had come between us. And perhaps he would respond—he would be as he was! It might even be that . . .

The train had drawn in. Almost at once I saw Horace's tall figure coming through the crowd toward me. He greeted me kindly; oh, yes, he was kind—*deadly* kind! But how quickly the hope died out of my heart, and again this weight of hopelessness and despair settled over me. He had come because it was his duty to come; he was kind because that was part of his duty, too. As I walked beside him to the hotel, I forced myself to make some trivial inquiries about the house, about Ellen. Through dinner the same constraint was upon us. Now he has gone for a walk by

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the beach. He asked me if I cared to go, but I knew he would rather go alone.

HOME, June 18th

Sunday night the Sea Cliff Hotel was burned to the ground. Two chambermaids and a colored porter were killed, and many were injured. Oh, it was horrible! I can still see the flames against the black sky and hear the screams of fright and crash of falling walls.

I was awakened by Horace: "Mary, get something on quickly as you can—you won't have time to dress!"

I started up bewildered, terrified; the room was already full of smoke, and the roar and crackling of flames could be plainly heard. My first thought was for my journal and jewel-case. I ran to the dresser and slipped them into a small hand-bag.

"Never mind your things," Horace's voice came sternly. "Put something around you—quick!"

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The smoke was thickening, sounds of voices and rushing feet came from the hall. Some one pounded on our door with the cry of "Fire!" and the knock and cry were repeated down the hall. Horace, who was only partially dressed, caught me in his arms, jerked a blanket from the bed and wrapped it around me. As he threw open the door, a cloud of black smoke rushed in upon us. The elevators were not running, and a struggling crowd of half-dressed people choked the stairway at the end of the hall. Carrying me easily, Horace turned toward a dim red-globed light, which marked a fire-escape at the end of the passage. The way led through a linen-room, the door of which was already open.

When he stepped through the window on the ladder-like structure I could see the flames leaping up from below, and a shower of sparks fell over us.

"Not this way—let us go back!" I cried, struggling to slip from his arms. But he only held me closer.

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"There is no other way, Mary."

The quiet strength of his voice reassured me. From below came the heavy pumping of engines, the shouts of firemen, and the screams of some hysterical woman. We were on the eighth floor; steadily, firmly, he carried me down that steep, narrow fire-escape. The heat was almost unbearable. Horace drew the blanket over my face to protect it from the falling sparks. The last flight was through the very flames themselves—even through the blanket I could feel their scorching heat.

When we reached the ground some one helped Horace unwrap the hot blanket from about me, and I stood in my bare feet on the water-soaked ground, among a network of fire hose, and with only a thin negligee over my night-dress. Again Horace lifted me in his arms and carried me through the crowd, across the street to a porch of one of the cottages.

Every one was very kind; we were given a room in the cottage, and a doctor was



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soon there dressing Horace's burns. His neck and shoulders were cruelly blistered. He had had no coat, and a thin linen shirt was no protection from that fierce heat.

At his dictation I wrote a number of telegrams, one for Ellen to come out on the first morning train with clothes for us both, and one for his office.

It was almost dawn before I could persuade him to lie down. I lowered the shades of the little cottage bedroom, and then threw myself on a couch at the foot of the bed.

As I watched the flickering shadows from the dim lamp on the dressing-table, I lived over again all the terrors of that night. If it had not been Sunday—if Horace, with his calm, quiet strength, had not been there!

What ghastly thoughts come to one at times! And one came to me then, the hideous thought of how easy it would have been for Horace *not* to have awakened me! Many men have killed their wives for the

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love of some other woman; and he had only to let me sleep! Desperately I tried to think of something else—to crush out a thought so cruelly unjust to him. And then came another—almost as hideous: If in some way *she* had been there! If he could have saved only one—and had to choose between us—which would it have been?

There flashed through my mind the incident of a prominent man, upon whom such a choice had been forced. He was rowing several miles from shore with his wife and her younger sister, whom it had long been rumored that he loved. A storm arose suddenly, and the boat capsized. He could swim so great a distance carrying only *one*, and it had been the woman he loved—not his wife—that he had saved.

I sprang from the couch in physical protest against the horror of such thoughts. Had not the night been fearful enough? Why must I now be haunted in this way?

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"Are you still nervous, Mary? Won't you come over and lie beside me?"

My heart leaped. I did not speak for fear of the joy and love in my voice. As I lay down by his side with my head upon the arm he had stretched out for me across the pillow, a great sense of peace and rest stole over me. All thoughts but that of his nearness left me. It had been so long since I had lain like that, and now it was as though I had come home—*home*—after months of weary yearning and wandering. The dear warmth and strength of his body seemed to draw from me all the aching weariness and heartsickness of this long year, and soothed me with a wonderful rest and content.

After a while he moved his head slightly, so that his lips touched my hair.

"Mary, tired, brave little woman," he murmured softly. And then slept quietly with his lips still against my hair.

And I know that I would gladly go through again all the terrors of that night

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to feel once more the peace and joy and nearness that came to me then.

June 21st

I have made my nervousness about the fire an excuse for not going anywhere else this summer. I told Horace yesterday that we might make a number of week-end trips to near-by resorts, but that I did not care to go anywhere and stay alone during the week. He said he wanted me to do whatever I felt would make me most comfortable. He has been very kind and gentle since that night. Was it the nearness of death that brought us closer, that made him feel all that I had been in his life? If I could only know what passed through his mind as he carried me down that fire-escape!

## CHAPTER III

June 23d

I HAVE been looking at a picture of Horace, taken when he was about ten years old. What a serious little boy he was, standing there by a chair in that quaint velvet suit, his hair combed back very straight and smooth from his earnest little face! How he laughed over this picture when I found it among his things soon after our marriage! And I have another, taken when he was in college, a tall, slim youth, with the same earnest face and grave, dark eyes.

There is a feeling almost of exultation that these pictures are mine—wholly mine. He can give *her* none like them, for there are no others. And I feel, too, that all the memories of his youth belong more to me

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than they ever can to her. I do not think he could ever tell her of his boyish dreams and aspirations, as he once told them to me.

June 25th

Why are we never honest enough to admit that when we are unhappy the unhappiness of others is comforting? I have heard people say: "If I cannot be happy myself, I like to see others around me happy." *That is not true.* We may wish it were, but it is not.

I have just received a letter from Edith Carrington, a cousin who lives in Boston, and who I have always thought was most happily married. She has a beautiful home, two beautiful children, and, as I always believed, a devoted husband. Lately in my own desolation I have thought with envy of the security and love which surrounded her life. And now she writes that she has determined to leave her husband, that for months he had been drinking

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and cruelly mistreating her, and is living openly with a well-known actress. Knowing I will read the newspaper accounts of the divorce which will soon be instituted, she is sending this letter that I may have the facts first from her. She writes that she is heartbroken—life seems black and hopeless, and she don't know how she can go on living.

When I laid down the letter, I knew that mingled with the sincere pity and sympathy I felt for her was something like joy, a fierce *joy* that her suffering was as great as mine. If through any efforts of mine I could restore to her her happiness, there is no sacrifice I would not make to do so. But since I am powerless to help her, since no thought or feeling of mine can either increase or lessen her misery, I know that her letter has brought me the greatest consolation I have had for days. It *helps* me to know her husband has been more cruel to her than Horace has been to me.

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June 27th

To-day a young and beautiful woman got on a street-car and took a seat beside me. I caught my breath at her almost dazzling beauty. Her skin was marvelously white and clear, with a faint rose pink in her cheeks. There was not a line or blemish in her face, and it was the beauty of youth and freshness—there was no paint nor powder there. She was dressed with daring, striking simplicity—a white broad-cloth suit, and a plain, white-felt sailor.

I watched her with a sickening sense of envy—almost of hatred. I seemed to *feel* all the lines in my poor, wan, faded face. I could not bear to sit beside her. Oh, I felt so old—so pitiaibly old! At the next corner I got off and walked home, my heart filled with a dumb, hopeless misery.

June 28th

What vague, illusive thoughts come to one in that half-consciousness just before sleep. Last night some such strange



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vagaries filled my mind, and I found myself thinking: "I will hold these—I will remember this." But this morning they are all gone. I can recall only that it was something about Horace, some way out of all my wretchedness, some way by which I could bring back my old happiness. It seemed so clear then, so easy of attainment. And I remember so well the thought that I must not forget—there was even a desire to get up and write it down, and then came the feeling that I *was* writing it down. And I was filled with a great sense of relief that everything would come right, and drifted off to sleep.

Of course, it could have been nothing real or tangible, and yet all morning I have been trying to recall what it was.

June 29th

I must know who she is and where she lives. I cannot endure any longer these torturing doubts and suspicions. To-morrow I shall follow him. A year ago I

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would have shrunk from such a thought with untold horror, but now—I am *desperate* now. I must *know*.

June 30th

I have just bought a cheap black hat and heavy veil. How old it makes me look! I know now how kindly my hats are to my face; with what art my milliner shapes them. But this straight, stiff brim cruelly hardens and ages my features. I have found a black skirt and coat that I have not worn for years and that I know he will not recognize. In this disguise I will follow him.

*Midnight*

It is over. I have followed him. I *know*. At four o'clock I was in Nassau Street, waiting by the door of the great trust building in which he has his offices. So many people were pouring in and out that I was afraid I might not see him, so I went inside the large corridor where I could watch the elevators. The place

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seemed throbbing, pulsating with the life of the business world. The thought that my husband was a part, a prominent part, of all this thrilled me with a momentary sense of pride.

All these men, hurrying away from their offices, well groomed and prosperous, some household, the life of some woman, centered about each of them. How many of them, through neglect and indifference, were breaking the heart of that woman?

At last I saw him step from one of the elevators. My pulse throbbed wildly. How strange to have him pass me in that way—without even glancing toward me! Secure in my disguise, I followed closely, fearful of losing him in the crowd.

At the corner he stopped to buy a paper. I had thought he would take the subway, so I had no difficulty in following him there. But when he reached the entrance, he hesitated, glanced at his watch, and then turned back and crossed the street to a drugstore.

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Instinctively I knew it was to telephone—but to whom? Was he going to telephone me that he would not be home for dinner, as he had so often of late? Or was the message for her?

As I passed the drugstore, I could see three telephone-booths in the far end. I knew he was in one of those booths. The flashing thought that I might secure the adjoining one and hear the message made me enter the store, heedless of the risk. Through the glass door of the first booth I saw the head and shoulders of a man I did not know. In the second was my husband. Quickly I slipped into the third. At first I could hear nothing, then quite distinctly I heard his voice. "Ring them again, Central."

"Hello. This is Mr. Kennedy, Ellen. Ask Mrs. Kennedy to come to the 'phone. She is out? Well, when she comes in, tell her that I have been detained at the office and may not be home until late; for

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her not to wait dinner. That's all. Good-by."

A pause. Then: "Hello, Central. Give me 8205 River." Again a pause. "Hello. Oh, why, I am through earlier than I thought," with a strange gentleness in his voice. "I'm on my way up now. Yes, in half an hour or less. Yes," with a tender little laugh. "Good-by."

Blindly, with trembling limbs, I followed him from the store, across the street, back to the subway. There was a crowd at the ticket window. Would he be gone before I could get through? A local was drawing out—had he taken that? No, he was there on the platform, waiting for an express. In a moment one dashed in. I followed him into the same car. It was crowded. I could see that he was standing about the middle of the car. Some one had given me a seat near the door, and, as the train sped on, I closed my eyes. "8205 River!" The number seemed floating in red and black waves beneath my,

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closed lids. That was her telephone! From that I could find her address. I need not follow him, and yet I knew that I would. I had no resistance then against the force that was sweeping me on.

A moment's stop at Fourteenth Street, and the train plunged on with a deafening roar. Forty-second, Seventy-second—where would he get off? I could see only his hand and arm as he held to a strap some distance away. His glove was unbuttoned and partly turned back, showing his wrist. There was something in that glimpse of firm white flesh between his cuff and glove that strangely increased the faintness I was so desperately fighting.

At Ninety-sixth I saw him making his way toward the door. Dizzily I followed. Out from the subway, across Ninety-sixth toward the park. How fast he walked! Was he so eager to reach her? A little farther on and he entered one of the large apartment houses that faced the park.

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Everything blurred before me as I walked to the end of the block and looked back. In some part of that building was my husband with another woman! Even now he was greeting her. . . .

July 9th

I have been sick for over a week. That day broke me down.

July 10th

I have always thought that books in which women wring their hands and walk up and down the room crying "O God—God! What can I do? How can I bear it?" are melodramatic and absurdly unreal. I know now that they may be very real. The hysterical things I now do and say when I am alone are more tensely emotional than anything I have ever read.

While I was sick, in a strained, awkward way he was very kind to me. It was as though he was trying to make up for the infidelities of which he thinks I am ignorant. How much longer can I be silent?

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I do not yet know her name. I have had no strength for anything more. But now with her address and telephone number it will not be hard to find the rest, only I cannot do it now.

July 11th

The nights are so horrible! If I could only sleep. But for weeks I have lain awake until three or four in the morning. And all through these long hours my mind is going over and over the same thing. Night and day the thought of that other woman is always with me.

July 13th

To-day I did a strange thing. I took a car to a cheap boarding-house section of the city and looked for a room. I had made a list of a few addresses from the morning paper, advertising "well-furnished hall bedrooms, hot and cold water, excellent table board." For so long I have been haunted with the thought of how little I could live on, that to-day I



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felt I must know. I went to all the places on my list. The "well-furnished" rooms were alike—wretchedly shabby and dingy. The battered furniture, the faded carpets, the dark halls, and the musty smell of cooking! And the dining-rooms, invariably in the basement, were unspeakably horrible. Long tables with soiled cloths, thick plates and heavy glasses, and knives and forks with silver worn off. Along the center of each table were arranged the glass sugar bowls, the blackened catchup bottles, the smeared oil and vinegar cruets. A hall bedroom and board in these places cost from six to seven dollars a week.

Could I live like that? At each place the "landlady" looked curiously at my clothes. One of them asked bluntly for whom I wished the room, and I answered in confusion: "For a friend."

July 15th

Yesterday I asked Horace what yearly interest came from the fifteen hundred

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dollars I received from Cousin Allen's estate. He looked up in surprise. "Why, Mary, you don't mean that you need——" And I answered hurriedly: "Oh, no, I don't need the money; the amount you give me for my own and the household expenses is more than enough. I merely wondered how much a small sum like that would bring in yearly."

"Let me see: I bought some Missouri Pacific with that—did I not? Well, that is paying —— now. I should say that would be about —— a year."

"And if it were sold outright, how much would it bring now?" I asked.

"Why, somewhere around eighteen hundred. But what do you mean? You never asked such questions before."

"Oh, nothing. I just had a fancy to know how much I had of my very own."

"Why, you know you have all that Western Union stock, don't you? And those lots in Brooklyn and that land in Ulster County?"

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“Oh, yes, I know that is all what you gave me. But I just wondered how much Cousin Allen’s money would bring.”

All through dinner he looked disturbed and worried. I suppose he has always felt that I was well provided for. Evidently the thought that if we were ever separated I would not touch a cent of his money, or of anything he had ever given me, had not occurred to him. And yet living with me all these years, he ought to know. He ought to *know* that I could never share his money with another woman.

July 17th

I have written her a letter. Of course, I shall never send it. And yet I could not help writing it. It was not a bitter letter. I only asked if she knew the wretchedness she was bringing into another woman’s life. That for me life held nothing but my husband. That for her there was so much more. I felt that she was young and beautiful—that she had the whole

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world to choose from. Why had she taken from me all that I had?

Already I have destroyed the letter, and yet the very writing of it was humiliating—corrosively humiliating. That I should plead for my husband's love from another woman! Beg from a stranger for what is mine—mine by law, by seventeen years of love and devotion! Oh, does he never think of that—that I have given him the best of my life—my youth, my freshness? And now that I am faded and old he turns from me to a younger, fresher face. Is that the nature of man? Are all men so? Then why does God let women be born to such anguish?

July 18th

I have still made no effort to find out her name. I have the feeling now that I would rather not know. In a few weeks it may be different; I may be again filled with that fierce desire to know—to *know*. But now I shrink from knowing any more.

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July 20th

What weak, inadequate things are letters of condolence! It seems almost an impertinence to hope that by a few cheap, trite, commonplace words you can soothe or alleviate a great sorrow. And yet it is a custom that must be followed, lest one's silence be mistaken for indifference.

I have just written to Helen Chandler, whose husband, George L. Chandler, died last week. She has been prostrated since his death. She loved him desperately. He was kind to her in a way, but he was always wild and dissipated.

July 21st

This is my birthday. In all these years he has never before forgotten; he has always brought me flowers. But to-day he does not even know. I shall not mention it. I want no remembrance that must be prompted. Forty-six to-day—and I look fifty. Oh, how horribly I have aged in this past year! All these sleepless nights have

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carved deep lines in my face. And yet I must live on—I must take whatever life has in store for me. There is no escape.

July 22d

To-night at dinner he spoke of giving up the house. Asked what I thought of taking an apartment this winter. Said it would be less lonely for me when he could not get home for dinner. That he often felt the uselessness of keeping this big house for just us two; it seemed almost as though it was kept up more for the benefit of the servants than anything else.

When he saw my distress at the thought, he said of course it should be as I wished; he wanted me to be where I would be most happy, but lately he had felt I might be happier in a hotel, where I would not be so much alone. After that he did not press the matter, but I could see he was disappointed.

So he wants to give up our house. He wants to live at a hotel, where he can

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be more free. It is the beginning of the end.

July 24th

Sometimes I wonder if I could have held his love longer had I dressed more and been more careful that he should never see me unless I was attractively gowned. When I look back I am filled with dismay to think how often he has seen me when I must have been most unattractive. It is true that fifteen years of married life have made me careless. I remember all the lacy, delicate perfumed lingerie of my wedding trousseau, and how he used to admire them and call them "frilikins." But now I wear the plainest and sometimes most unbecoming things. I have felt that it was unnecessary and even extravagant to spend as much money on lingerie; instead I have put it in the house—in rugs, cut-glass and silver—in things I could "keep."

Oh, how foolish I have been! How much wiser to have bought some expensive

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morning-gowns than that solid silver tea-set this fall. The gowns would have made *me* more attractive every morning at breakfast; and the tea-service—I don't think he has ever noticed it.

And in the evening for dinner—how rarely I make an effort to dress when we are alone. I have a number of charming evening-gowns, but I seldom wear them, except when we dine out or have some one dining with us. What am I saving them for? I can have plenty more. Oh, how blind I have been! Why have I worn them only for the benefit of others? What do I gain from the passing admiration of strangers or even friends—compared to the admiration of my husband? Is it too late to begin anew? Can I ever efface the impression years of indifferent dressing have made upon him?

July 26th

All morning delivery wagons have been stopping at our door. The maid has been



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bringing me boxes and packages innumerable. Yesterday I spent the whole day in the shops. And now my room is strewn with laced and ribboned lingerie—boxes and tissue-paper wrappings are everywhere. And yet how little of the natural woman's joy of possession I feel in all these dainty things. Perhaps because I feel the hopelessness of the cause for which they were purchased. One after another I examine them; some I try on. An exquisite pale-blue silk house-gown I fold sadly back in its box to be returned. That I could never wear; its clear, cold blue is made for the freshest, youngest beauty. How mercilessly it brings out the sallowness of my skin and my faded hair.

A soft lavender is more kindly, and a morning-gown of cream white with quantities of creamy lace is not unbecoming. And yet none of them can make me beautiful; they cannot take from my face the signs of age and worry.

Oh, my husband, why can you not love

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me as I am? If you were to become deformed or pock-marked, it would not change my love. Horace, Horace, why is your love so different?

July 27th

This morning I came down to breakfast in one of my usual plain linen shirt-waists. For some reason I could not wear any of my new negligees. I felt absurdly shy and self-conscious, and there was a dread that he might divine my motive. I tried to pave the way. As I poured his coffee I remarked casually that I was going shopping to-day, that I had become suddenly possessed with the desire to have some new clothes, and lots of them.

He looked up from his paper and said kindly: "Why, yes, why don't you? I have always wanted you to have nice things. Do you want some money?" I laughed and said no, I thought I had enough.

"Well, if you run short, have them

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charged," he said comfortably, and returned to his paper.

It was foolish of me to feel disappointed; he was kind and generous; perhaps that should have been enough. And yet—if there only had been a note of real interest; if he had made some little request for me to get something of some particular shade and design. If only he had made me feel that he *cared!*

July 28th

This morning I found courage to put on one of the daintiest of my new house-gowns—a soft lavender crêpe. I came down to breakfast and waited with beating heart for some approving comment. It was some time before he noticed it, then he said kindly:

"Is that one of the results of your shopping tour?"

I nodded.

"It is very pretty."

And that was all. Had he said "that

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shade suits you," or "I like the softness of the lace"—even a slight criticism would have shown some interest. But "it is very pretty" meant so little.

July 29th

How pitiful are my efforts to make myself attractive; how futile to try to compete with *her* in that way! She has all the weapons, all the advantages—youth, beauty (for she must be beautiful), and the greatest thing of all—the charm of the unknown.

He has never seen her when she was ill, or worn out. He has never seen her under the countless unfavorable conditions that a man so often sees his wife. She always knows when he is coming and can always be at her best.

## CHAPTER IV

August 1st

HELEN CHANDLER has been here all afternoon. She was called to town unexpectedly for a few days—something about her husband's estate. Said she felt she must see me. That she wanted to *talk*—and felt I would understand as no one else could.

I hardly knew her—she looked so white and frail in her heavy crêpe. I took her upstairs at once, made her lie down, and had Mary bring some tea. But she pushed the tea aside and began walking up and down the room.

"No—no—I can't rest! I can't be quiet—I want to *talk*! It will help me more than anything else.

"Oh, I know what you think—what every one thinks—that he was a brute—

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that he drank—that he was untrue to me! You wonder why I should grieve so. I presume some people think it an affectation—my grief, I mean. God! if it only were! But I loved him—I *loved* him! In spite of all his dissipations he was never unkind to me. He was fond of me in his way—his selfish, careless way. But I would rather have had what little he gave me than the most loyal, faithful devotion of the noblest man on earth!

“Can you reason about love? If he had beat me I would still have loved him. But my love never blinded me—don’t think that. I saw all his coarseness, all his weakness; I never for a moment idealized him. I knew him for what he was—but I *loved* him.

“And now at night I feel that I must get up and go to his grave and with my bare hands dig down to the coffin and lie there with him. He always hated to be alone—he always wanted company, life,

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gaiety. And now he is lying there alone—*alone* in that dark, silent graveyard. Oh, there are times when I feel I *must* go to him—that he is calling me—that I must get up out of bed and go to him and stay with him!”

My face was now as white as hers. I felt if she did not stop I would faint. But I made no effort to quiet her. I knew it would be useless—that she must wear herself out.

“He was so big and strong—so full of life and vitality. Oh, how I loved his great, strong body—his vigorous manhood—his physical self. His muscles were like iron, and yet his skin was as soft and white as a baby’s. I used to say it was like velvet—white velvet over iron. Oh, his *body*—his milk-white body——”

I don’t think I heard any more. It seemed to me the room was full of women. I could hear the swish of trailing skirts—the air seemed charged with the *feel* of

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women, of flowing hair, of heaving breasts, of the anguished love of womanhood.

At length from sheer exhaustion she threw herself upon the couch. I did not try to comfort her—I knew too well the cheapness, the futility of words. After a while she said faintly: “I think I can sleep now. It is always like this. After I wear myself out there comes a sense almost of peace—it is the only peace I have. I can’t explain it, but it always comes. After these violent outbursts I feel as though I had been drugged—a soothing, quieting drug.”

I stooped over and kissed her. “Don’t say anything more—try not to arouse yourself again—sleep if you can.” I darkened the room and left her. She slept quietly for over an hour. I tried to persuade her to stay all night. But she wanted to go back home—to their country home where he died. Said she had been in town two nights, and she wanted to get back—she felt nearer him out there.



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August 3d

"The incessant sadness of life." That phrase comes to me so often now. I have been standing at the window watching the steady stream of traffic in which there are so many notes of misery. A wagon filled with freshly slaughtered calves, their legs, now only bloody stumps, protruding stiffly from under the burlap covering. And I think of the terror in the soft eyes of those helpless animals as they were driven pitilessly to the ax. Another wagon piled high with slatted boxes full of huddling chickens. Poor, frightened things, on their way to be killed, straining their necks through the slats for a breath of air. The stolid indifference of the driver as he whips up the jaded horse that draws them. The clang of the police-patrol as it dashes by, a haggard man with a bandaged head inside.

I turned from the window sick at heart. The incessant sadness of life! The incessant sadness of life!

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August 4th

There is a boarding-house across the street from us—the only one in this block, where almost every one owns their own property. Every evening now, since the weather is so warm, the steps of that house are full of people. They bring out grass mats and sofa pillows and sit on the steps and stone balustrades, the cigars of the men glowing among the light dresses of the women. I think I watch them with something like envy, they seem so happy and sociable in an easy, unconventional way. The sound of their laughter comes repeatedly through my open windows. Now and then a couple will leave the rest and stroll bareheaded down the street.

To-night they were singing; one of them had a mandolin. They began with some new popular airs and ended with a number of old-fashioned songs—"My Old Kentucky Home," "Ben Bolt" and "Annie Laurie." As I sat there by the window in my lonely, silent house, those old,

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familiar songs, the summer night—for me there was an infinite melancholy about it all. All my loneliness and heart-hunger seemed intensified.

The air grew more and more close and sultry. Then came a distant muttering of thunder, and then some large raindrops. The songs ceased and there were little shrieks of laughter as the group across the street hurried into the house.

Now it is raining in torrents—a summer heat-rain. I can hear it beating upon the roof almost like hail. Little rills of water are running down the window-pane beside my desk. How black it has grown—the street-lights are only faint blurs through this thick rain-veil.

And I sit here writing—writing, trying only to keep some of the horror of my loneliness away.

Could Horace have gone out without an umbrella? He takes cold so easily. How strange a thing is a woman's love! Even though she feels her husband is spending

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the evening with another woman, still she worries lest he has no umbrella—his physical welfare still fills her thoughts.

August 5th

How many women past their first youth find consolation in the thought of certain famous women who were still attractive, still admired, late in life! The memory of such women as Madame de Staël, Madame Récamier and George Sand has instilled the hope and comfort in the heart of many a faded woman that though time may line the face, the charm of personality, intelligence and wit may still win and hold love.

The looking-glass may be undeniable proof that her face is no longer beautiful, but nothing can prove to even the most vapid woman that her mentality, grace and wit have not the greatest charm.

SUNDAY, August 6th

The telephone just rang. I answered it, but no one spoke. Again and again I

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said "Hello!" But there was no response. And yet the silence seemed charged with a personality—I felt there was some one there. Could it be . . . *Had she called* and, not hearing his voice, *had not answered?* Of course it may have been a mistake; Central may have unintentionally rung our number. But somehow I feel that it was not a mistake. I have that strange, weak sensation which always comes with anything that relates to her.

August 9th

This evening we went out to dinner. Until the last year we have always dined out at some hotel or restaurant at least once a week. But now so rarely we ever go anywhere together. Perhaps it was because I have eaten so little lately that made him suggest the change might do me good. I consented eagerly. We went to the ———, a place I have always liked.

For the first few moments I was almost happy—the lights, the music, the gay,

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well-dressed people all around, and my husband, gracious and distinguished, across from me. Impulsively I reached my hand across the table toward him. He pressed it slightly and smiled at me kindly. I could see that he was *trying* to respond, that he sincerely wanted me to have a happy evening, that he wanted to give me what he could. And I resolved to keep the ache from my heart and the choking lump from the throat, to try to forget everything but that we were together.

He ordered the dinner with his usual quiet discrimination, that always wins instantly the best attention of the waiter. I have never had the same excellent service in dining with any one else as with my husband. He always orders some light wine, and to-night it was sparkling Chablis.

But in spite of both our efforts, for I know we both tried, the dinner was strained and silent. One of the most pitiful conditions of our life now is that we have so little to say. Oh, it is horrible—

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this conscious strained silence that is always between us! If only for one evening we could talk—just *talk* as we used to do—it would help me more than anything in the world.

Feeling the failure of the dinner, he asked if I would like to go to the theater. The thought that there, at least, we would not feel the need to talk, and that I could be with him, *near* him a little longer, made me say yes. For I knew if we went home it would be to separate; he would go to his room and I to mine.

When we reached the street he bought an evening paper, handed it to me with the list of the theaters folded out, and asked where I would like to go. I glanced down the list. There were only three actors playing that I knew either of us would care to see, and they were all in plays which from reviews I knew were built around the marriage and divorce question—the unfaithfulness of either the husband

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or the wife. I finally chose a new play, in which the theme was a political one.

The first act was well advanced when we entered; by the end of the second I was rolling and unrolling my program with cold, nervous hands. The "political" element was only a background for the "problem"—the love of a Senator for a woman who was not his wife, a woman whom he had known and loved before he was married, and whom in his heart he had loved ever since.

The dramatic crisis was in the third act, where the woman, in a moment of fierce, uncontrollable jealousy, sends his wife one of the Senator's love letters—choosing with deliberate cruelty the one that will hurt her most, a beautiful, impassioned love message, written several months before on her birthday. There is no address or signature, but his wife will know his writing—it is unmistakable.

But she has hardly mailed the letter before she is overwhelmed with remorse,



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with bitterest regret for what she has done. She must stop its delivery—at any sacrifice she must keep his wife from reading that letter!

It was almost midnight when she mailed it—it could not be delivered before morning.

The next scene, at eight o'clock the following morning, finds her at the door of the Senator's house. She will not give her card or name, but there is something in the tenseness of her voice and manner that makes the servant reluctantly admit her. As she waits in the reception-room she asks herself fearfully: "If he should refuse to see her? Should she have risked it and sent up her card?"

And then he enters. When he sees who it is, he starts, closes the door and comes toward her with outstretched hands.

"Margaret! What is it, dear?"

Excitedly she questions him about the mail—the first delivery. Has it come yet?

He answers wonderingly "No," and

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then tenderly: "Is it some letter you have written me, dear, that you do not want me to read?"

"If it were only that!" she moans. "If it were only that!"

And then she tells him. He does not speak; he stands by a desk, turning a paper-weight over and over in his hand.

Then a whistle—the postman's whistle—is heard. The man crosses the room and presses an electric bell. A servant enters.

"You will bring the mail to me here at once—all of it."

"Yes, sir." The maid returns, lays the mail on the table and leaves the room.

The man glances hurriedly through the letters and then turns to the woman, who is leaning against the wall, her face buried in her hands.

"It is not here!"

"Not here?" Her voice is full of terror.

The maid is recalled and questioned.

She says she brought all the mail ex-

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cept two letters for Mrs. Hampton, which she herself took out as she was going into the breakfast-room.

As the maid withdraws the man starts violently at some sound in the hall. "Carrie—my wife—she is coming in here!" he murmurs huskily.

"No! no! It would be too horrible! Don't let it be!"

"It is too late now!" he answers, and even then the door opens.

Quickly the woman slips behind a heavy curtain. The wife holds an open letter in her hand, her face quivering with joy and tenderness.

"Oh, Richard—Richard—what a beautiful letter! That you should have remembered my birthday in this way! Yesterday I was afraid you had forgotten, and to-day—oh, it was the most wonderful gift you could have sent. And you had the envelope typewritten so the surprise would be more complete!" She clings to him lovingly, showering on him caresses

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and endearments, crying out that she had been so unhappy of late, that she felt he was growing farther away from her, that he no longer cared. And there had been a terrible fear in her heart that there might be some one else; but now she knows that she was wrong, she knows he loves her still, or he could not have written that letter.

He gently soothes and quiets her and leads her from the stage.

In the next act follows a wonderful scene of renunciation. Realizing as never before the piteous, clinging love of his wife, and feeling that they could never come together over the grave of her happiness, they resolve to part.

Only once during the play did I see Horace's face, and then it was when he stooped to pick up the program my nerveless fingers had dropped. He was very pale.

We left the theater in silence. Outside it was misting. He motioned to a cab and

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helped me in. I was filled with an intense longing for him to speak—to say some trivial, commonplace thing—anything but this silence, which seemed a subtle acknowledgment—a willingness that I should know. . . . We were almost home before he spoke, and then it was only to ask if he should draw down the curtain, if the mist was blowing in on me.

When we reached the house he made some remark about being tired, bade me good-night, and went at once to his room. What did his silence mean? Did he intend it for an admission? Did he want me to construe it that way? Why did he not talk casually of the play, comment on the acting or the construction of the plot, as we have always done before?

It is almost three o'clock. But how hopeless to try to sleep!

August 10th

This morning I know from his eyes that he, too, has not slept. I felt that I would regret it, that I would make a mistake if

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I made any reference to the play, and yet the hope that he would say something to help me, to make me feel that he had not wished to convey by his silence what I had thought last night, drove me to try to force from him some expression.

"Do you think such things end that way in life?" I tried to say it casually.

"How do you mean?" quietly.

"The parting in the last act. If a man really loves another woman, do they often renounce her for the sake of their wife?" I did not look up; I kept my eyes on a crust I was crumbling on the tablecloth.

There was a slight pause, and then he answered slowly:

"I should think that would depend on the man's strength."

"But if he had much strength," my voice was measured, "would he have ever allowed himself to love another woman?"

"No; I presume not."

I waited, but he said nothing more. In a few moments he glanced at his watch,

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and left for the office. My efforts had been futile—his voice and manner had betrayed nothing.

August 11th

Am I too self-centered? Do I give way to my grief too much? Would another woman under the same circumstances have more strength? I know how dangerous is this constant brooding. I know that I am losing all sense of proportion. His slightest word and action I now bring to bear always upon one thing. I know that I draw suspicions from perfectly innocent causes. My mind is so colored that I am able to see nothing else.

And yet how can I help it? I have tried to fight against it, to force an interest in other things, to drive my mind to things outside myself. And yet always the background of my thoughts remains the same. Never for a moment am I wholly free from the consciousness that my husband is drifting away from me—that he loves

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another woman. That poisonous thought is always with me.

August 12th

More and more I have come to take a morbid, feverish interest in newspaper accounts of divorce scandals and intrigues. Such things have always repulsed me; until lately, I would not even read the headlines. But now—now I read all the details with a consuming interest. I will even read the varying accounts of the same case in the different papers. It all fills me with loathing, and yet it has this fearful hold upon me.

These things that I have always regarded with such horror are now touching so closely my own life. Not the vulgar publicity, of course; that I feel will never come. But the underlying cause is always the same—the love of a man for a woman who is not his wife. It terrifies me when I think that everything in life now seems bearing on that—novels, plays—they are all built on variations of that theme.



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August 13th

I was in a bookstore to-day buying some stationery, when I saw one of the many reprints of a pen-and-ink sketch that have been much displayed in the shops. I have always thought it gruesome, and passed it with a shudder. But to-day I bought one. I don't know why.

From a distance it is the outline of a skull; nearer, one sees it is cleverly formed by a beautiful woman sitting before a dressing-table, the bottles and trinkets before her forming the teeth, and the drapery over the dresser the top of the skull.

I have it now on my desk. There is a sort of fierce pleasure in thinking that the woman Horace loves will one day be a hideous, grinning skeleton. All his love and devotion cannot save her from that. The skeleton is there now—the ugly, gaunt bones—if he could only see through the soft, fair flesh that covers them.

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August 14th

Once or twice a year Ellen sends a box of clothing to her mother, who, with a large family of children, lives in Georgia. They are very poor and can make use of anything that is sent. I always collect a lot of my own and Horace's clothes, and it was for this purpose that I went through some trunks in the store-room to-day.

In one of the trays I came across a pale-blue dressing-gown, one of the garments I had myself made for my trousseau. I had worn it but a few times, for I always felt the neck was cut too low. And now, except that the lace had grown yellow, it was still fresh.

How beautifully it was made, with what care I had finished each small seam. And what hopes and dreams I had sewn into it. And now those tiny stitches, fine and frail as they were, had outlived my happiness! Oh, if I could only go back—if I could only go back!

For a long time I held the gown in my

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lap, brooding over it, filled with the memories it brought. How strange to have it there before me, every stitch I had put into it still so *real*, so *permanent*, while all that it was made for is dead!

In the lace of the sleeve was a long, jagged tear. Oh, how vividly I remembered that. It had been torn on Horace's cuff-button during our bridal trip. I was standing before the dressing-table arranging my hair, when suddenly he came up behind me and caught me in his arms, bent back my head against his shoulder, and with his lips against my hair, murmured: "My darling—my beautiful darling! You belong to me now! You can never go back and be just yourself again, for now you *belong to me*—do you *know* that, dear?" My only answer was to press my face closer against his breast, and so he held me silently.

When at length he released me, there was a sound of tearing lace. "Oh, Mary!

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I'm so sorry!" as he stooped to unfasten it from his cuff-button.

"You needn't be," I laughed happily. "As if it mattered—as if anything mattered but *you!*"

Oh, Horace, Horace, you have torn my heart as you tore this lace; neither will ever be the same again. You said then I could never go back and be just myself. I would now if I could, for I know you no longer need me. But I cannot—I cannot! You made me part of yourself—you taught me to want you—to need you . . . :

And now—now you love some one else. And I am alone with only my memories.

August 15th

I saw him looking at my hands this morning. He may have done it absent-mindedly. But all through breakfast I was miserably conscious of how dark and withered they were. Oh, how cruelly hands show age! And he used to call them beautiful! And they were beautiful, soft and

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white, with tapering fingers and a delicate tracery of veins. But now the veins seem more like wires, the knuckles larger, and the skin has become yellow and leathery. I have been examining them mercilessly, holding them in different positions that I may know how they look best and worst. When they are closed the skin is more tightly drawn and they do not look so wrinkled, but when I lay them flat on the table, the skin on the back gathers in little folds and they look old—*old*. But worst of all is when I hold up my arm and let the hand droop at the wrist—there is something almost *claw*-like about it then. Oh, why do not women die before they grow old?

August 17th

I have been reading a much-advertised book in the form of a woman's diary. The publishers have enthusiastically proclaimed it a "marvelous revelation of a woman's heart!" Would any woman ever reveal her heart in carefully wrought epi-

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grams, or in an extravagant series of triplicated adjectives? What strained attempts at cleverness and painful striving for effect! In her desperate efforts to be brilliant and sensational, the author seems to have quite forgotten that it might also be effective merely to be—*true*.

When just now I came to this sentence, I threw down the book in violent protest:

It is all blued over with oblivion now, but sometimes I apprehend myself looking fearfully over the delicate whiteness of my arms, and fancying I discern here and there the faint, faded saffron of a bruise, my mind shudderingly recoils lest I be once more steeped in memory with its vast terrifying silence shot with sharp, convulsive flames of blinding pain, memories which engulf me in a maelstrom of emotions, crushing, castrating, deadening, leaving me but a pallid, swooning shadow of myself.

Would any suffering woman on God's earth ever write like that? Why this book should have aroused in me such fierce re-

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sentment I hardly know, unless it is because my whole nature rebels at the thought of a woman's emotions being banded forth with such mawkish sentimentalism and glaring artificiality.

SUNDAY, August 18th

Again it has happened—the telephone ring and no call. And now I know it was not a mistake—that it was *she*. Both times it has been on Sunday, the only day she cannot reach him at his office. He had been in all morning, and had just gone out when the bell rang. And when I answered there was no response. But this time Central shrilled: “There’s your party—go on!” Again I said “Hello!” but there was still no answer, nothing but that strange silence, that seemed throbbing with some mysterious presence. And then faint and far away came a sound like a sob—a stifled sob. I listened tensely and for many moments, but there was no other sound.

Then I rang Central and asked where

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the call was from, but she could not tell me. All day I have been haunted by the sound of that faint, distant sob. What did it mean? Can she be unhappy? The thought that she may suffer, too, had never come to me. And yet if she loves him . . .

August 20th

For several days he has seemed strangely harassed and worried. He does not go out, but spends the evenings alone in his study. He avoids me and will see no callers. Says he is not well, but I know it is not that. It is something about *her*. That another woman should have the power to make my husband suffer! The same question beats always in my mind: Why did God ever let this thing happen? Why did she ever come into his life?

I cannot bear to see him unhappy. If I could only share with him or help him in his trouble—yes, I would do even that! I would lighten or bear, if I could, the suffering this woman has brought him.



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But he shuts me out completely. Says he hopes I will not feel hurt, but that just now he would rather be alone. Last night he could eat no dinner; until almost dawn the light burned in his room, and this morning he only drank a cup of coffee and hurried off to the office.

August 24th

He was out until midnight last night, the first time for over a week. And this morning he came down to breakfast radiant. So whatever the trouble that was between them, it is over. And that has made him happy! Oh, my husband, my dear husband!

Perhaps it was from a feeling of pity for me, or perhaps his happiness filled him with a desire to give me some pleasure, too, for all through breakfast he talked to me, tried to take an interest in the house, and asked if there was anything he could send me. After he had gone, I went up to his room, took from the closet the coat he had

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worn the night before. Yes, the odor of that soft, elusive perfume was there. And on the shoulder was a long brown hair—silky fine and with a glint of gold.

## CHAPTER V

August 25th

HAVE I been too complacent? Have I suffered in silence when I should have asserted my rights? But what can I do? He is a man that reproaches, and accusations would only embitter. I could never force back his love to me in that way. Once I put this thing into words, it would completely estrange us. I would have to go away; I could not stay and let him know that I know. Oh, if I only had the *strength*, the *courage* to go away! Strange as it may seem, every fresh proof of his infidelity instead of giving me the strength to go, only weakens me, makes me cling to him more and more. I sometimes feel that my very love for him has degraded me, that it has made me oblivious to every sense of womanly pride.

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August 27th

This morning at breakfast I broke down completely. He was sitting across from me, his paper in one hand and his coffee-cup in the other. Unobserved, I was watching him, as I often do now, thrilled with a consciousness of every detail of his personality. The pose of his head and shoulders, the air of distinction with which he wore his clothes, the whiteness of his linen. The freshness of a morning bath was still about him, and now and then as I leaned forward I caught the faint fragrance of the toilet soap he always uses. It sent the blood rushing to my face as it brought back memories of the first years of our marriage, when I used to bury my face against his neck to breathe this odor partly of himself and partly of his bath. I tried to keep my eyes on my plate, but again as by a magnet they were drawn to his strong, well-shaped hand, the edge of his linen cuff, the cloth of his coat . . . I

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burst into tears, caught up my napkin, and hurried sobbing from the room.

Upstairs I locked my door and threw myself on the bed. Then I heard his knock. I buried my face in the pillows to muffle the sobs. A moment later I felt his hand on my shoulder. He had gone around the other way and come in through the bathroom.

"Why, Mary, what is it? What is the matter—*dear*?" Oh, how that "*dear*" hurt me—hesitating, reluctant, a concession, as it were, to bribe me from my tears.

He sat down beside the bed, and gently drew me to him. For a second I clung to him in pitiful abandonment, and yet I knew that he only *held* me—held me as one would hold another that they might not fall. There may have been pity, but I could feel there was no love in his touch. I shrank away and hid my face in the pillows again.

"Mary, are you ill? Tell me what it is."

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"Oh, you are killing me—*killing* me!" I sobbed.

A hideous silence. And then:

"What do you mean?" His voice was like steel.

And I knew then, had I never known before, how useless any appeal would be—how futile to beat against this wall he had placed between us.

"Oh, I am only nervous and hysterical. I haven't been well lately, that's all," I explained hurriedly.

"You are alone too much." His voice was more kindly now. "If you would go out more—that is why I wanted to take an apartment. I felt you would be happier and less lonely. I am going to have Dr. Martin call this afternoon."

I made no protests. I did not say that in all these years I had never been lonely before, that it was only now—now since he was always away from me. It would only have made him hard and bitter; it would not have helped.

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August 29th

Is there anything in life so sad as old love-letters—letters written by one who has since grown cold? To-day I went through a box of letters he wrote me before our marriage—wonderful, glowing love-letters. All these years I have kept them, and now I turn back to them with some vague hope that they will comfort me.

But they only hurt me more. They have only made me feel more terribly all that I have lost.

Oh, how dead they seem! All the love and hopes and desires that they were filled with are dead now. As I read them I try to forget, to live back in that time when they were written, to thrill again with the thought of the future that lay before me then; the future that was throbbing with his love, with the promise of all the tenderness and nearness that would be ours. Life holds nothing more beautiful than a young girl's dreams of the man she is to marry.

And my dreams came true. The first

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few years of our marriage I was happy beyond all words. Even when he was away from me I seemed to live every moment in the shelter of his arms; the sense of his love and protection and the bond between us was always with me.

And then that wonderful year before our child came. Oh, the tenderness—the *tenderness* of his love for me in that year! And then our great sorrow when it lived only a few short hours. I tried to keep much of my grief from him; in some vague way I felt that I had not fulfilled my mission. I cannot quite put it into words, and yet there was always a feeling that in the supreme test of wifehood I had failed. I have often wondered if other childless women have this same thought.

I am sure such a phase of it never occurred to him. He was very kind and gentle and did all that he could to comfort me.

I remember one day he came home earlier than usual and found me up in my



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room crying over some little clothes that had never been worn. He took me in his arms and begged me not to grieve so, that I must not be so hopeless, that some day the little clothes might still be needed. But they never were. Oh, if only they had been! If there had only come another child to complete our lives and our home, I feel that no one could have ever come between us then.

But even if they had—I would still have had something. I would have had the child—our child. And now I have nothing—nothing! All the beautiful dreams of my girlhood and wifehood are dead, and now I stand alone, old, childless, loveless and alone!

August 30th

I have been reading more of the letters. Yesterday I put them away and promised myself I would not open them again. And yet to-day an irresistible longing drew me to them, a sad fancy to find one written on this date, August 30th. I was

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not sure that there was one, for though our engagement lasted over a year, there were many days when we were together, when he did not write.

But I opened the box and looked for this date with a strange eagerness, an eagerness that was almost an anxiety—as though in some way I felt it might be some good omen—that something might follow if there was such a letter. The second envelope I picked up was postmarked August 20th. How strange! My heart beat fast. But I found no more in August until I had gone over half of them; then came one marked August 5th. I hurried on . . . August 12th . . . August 8th. Then all together were a number in August—almost every day but the 30th. Only a small handful were left. I was growing sick with disappointment. When there remained but two or three more letters out of all that box, the postmark August 30th lay before me.

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With trembling fingers I took it up. *The envelope was empty! An empty envelope!* and I had longed for some loving word—something that would comfort me—that I might take as a message *now!* There were a dozen or more loose letters in the bottom of the box, but none of them dated, except sometimes the day of week or perhaps the hour. And the paper was all the same—the plain, heavy white paper he always used; there was nothing to identify any of them with that empty envelope.

September 2d

I was at ———'s glove counter to-day, when suddenly I was conscious of a subtle perfume strangely like . . . My heart seemed beating in my throat as I turned. Beside me was a strikingly beautiful woman having some long white gloves fitted. At that moment a silver purse slipped from her lap to the floor. As she stooped for the purse, the movement brought the odor more strongly to me,

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leaving no doubt of its source. Could it be . . .

I was waiting for some change, but now I turned abruptly from the counter and walked blindly through the store. My first impulse was to get away—to hurry from the place as quickly as I could. But when I reached the street I was seized with an uncontrollable desire to go back—to see her again—just to *see* her! Would she still be there? I was trembling so I had hardly strength to push open the great swinging doors that led into the store. Down one aisle, then another—yes, she was there! Again that perfume; it came to me as I neared the counter. The clerk was folding the gloves in tissue-paper. “Yes, charge and send them—Mrs. A. L. Morris, Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn.” I could have cried aloud with joy. It was not *she*—that woman was not the one!

When I came home I wondered at the great relief that had swept through me.

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Why should the fact that it was not that woman bring me such comfort? The woman he loves is somewhere this morning—why should it matter so much to me that she was not at that counter? And yet it does. Had that woman given the address on Central Park West, I should have been desperate. And the fact that she did not has filled me with joy.

September 3d

Horace said at breakfast that he was going to Boston to-morrow on the early morning train, and asked if I would care to go; that I could spend the day with my Cousin Edith and come back with him at midnight. Or I could stay over a day or so if I wished.

I consented gladly. I used constantly to go with him on such trips, but now he so rarely asks me. If I could only feel that he really *wanted* me to go, as he used to, just to *have me with him*—but I know it is only because he has noticed my growing depression and thinks the diversion

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might do me good. Still, I am glad to go; for five hours I will sit beside him on the train, and that will be more than I have had for days.

I have heard nothing from Edith since that letter saying she was preparing to leave her husband and that the divorce proceedings would soon be published. But there has been nothing in the papers; they must have succeeded in keeping it quiet. Whatever happens, she has the consolation of two beautiful children; they will keep her life from being wholly desolate.

September 6th

I have spent two days with Edith Carrington; I did not come back until this morning. And those two days were only another revelation of the tragedy of marriage and the incessant misery of life.

I had written the night before that I was coming, but for some reason the letter was delayed, and I reached there before it did. It was about one o'clock. As

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the maid opened the door, Edith was coming downstairs, charmingly gowned, ready for the street. At first I thought I had never seen her look so well, and then I noticed a certain nervous excitement, and a hard brilliancy about her eyes.

She greeted me cordially, but I felt something not quite natural in her manner. I found that she had a luncheon engagement, but she insisted on breaking it and spending the afternoon with me. In spite of my protests, she went to the telephone in the hall. She closed the door and spoke in a low tone, yet I could not help hearing part of what she said, though I walked to the window farthest away from the hall. And what I heard seemed very strange.

When she came back into the room, her face was slightly flushed.

"It is all right—I have postponed the luncheon till Friday. You need not feel conscience-stricken, for I would much rather have it then; by that time I will

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have the gown the tailor disappointed me about to-day.

"Now, come upstairs, and we'll take off our things. I'll have Jane serve us something up there, so we can have a nice long talk. I'm sure we've lots to talk about," with a little laugh that seemed hard and mirthless.

During the luncheon we talked of only the most impersonal things, neither of us touching on her divorce or the letter she had written me. I was strangely puzzled. I had never known that she drank wine, particularly at luncheon, but now she drank a good deal.

When the maid had cleared away the things she drew out a small silver case filled with cigarettes and lit one carelessly. Seeing the amazement I could not keep from my eyes, she laughed again that hard little laugh.

"Oh, yes, I smoke now—every one does."

The afternoon passed in desultory gos-



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sip, with still no reference to her husband or to anything at all personal. When I asked about the children, she answered briefly that they were in boarding-school and came home every other week to spend Sunday! And this was the woman whom for years I had known to be the most adoring mother, who could hardly let her children be out of her sight!

About four the maid came in with a long, white flower box. "This just came, ma'am."

"Very well; you can leave it there on the table," Edith said carelessly, but I saw the color rushing to her face.

With what seemed almost like studied indifference, she talked on to me several moments before she went over to open the box. From their tissue-paper wrappings she lifted out a magnificent bunch of American Beauty roses.

"Oh, what exquisite roses!" I said involuntarily.

"Yes, they are lovely, aren't they?"

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After all, there is no flower quite like the rose." From the broad satin ribbon that held them she unpinned a small envelope and slipped it unopened into her dress.

And that was all. She arranged them in some large vases, but made no further comment about them.

Horace was to call up at six, to know if I had decided to return with him. I had rather thought I would stay, that a few days from home might be well for me, but now I was anxious to go back. Whatever had happened in Edith's life, I felt it was something I would rather not know, and that to remain would only be painful to us both.

When the telephone rang a few moments after six, she answered it first. I heard her invite Horace to dinner. And then: "I am sorry you can't come up, but I am going to keep Mary—she is going to stay over a day or two."

And when I hurried to the 'phone, protesting, she covered the mouthpiece, and

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turned to me with a strange earnestness.

"No; you must stay, Mary—you must stay because I want you—I *need* you! I thought I didn't—that I was almost sorry you had come, and that I would let you go back without—without telling you. But I know now I cannot!"

She thrust the receiver into my hand. "Tell him that you have decided to stay—at least until to-morrow."

Reluctantly I yielded. I seemed powerless to do anything else.

When I hung back the receiver, she said nervously: "We are not going to talk about it now—not just yet—I don't think I can. Frank will be home for dinner to-night; he dines here about twice a week, and I always manage to have some guests. Mr. and Mrs. Elton are coming to-night, and George Forrester and Grace Hartford—you remember her?"

She talked on about the dinner and the guests, making no further reference to her husband. I asked no questions. I had

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something of the feeling one has in watching the developments of a play.

Later when Edith dressed for dinner, I realized suddenly that she was still a young and beautiful woman. She wore a pale lavender gown that was cut lower, and fitted more closely, and was more subtly striking, than anything I had ever seen her wear. I did not see Frank Carrington until he took me in to dinner. He was a man that looked particularly well in evening dress, and as I looked at Edith and then at him I wondered why love had ceased between these two. Physically, at least, they were both attractive. And yet several times during the dinner I saw him glance at her across the table, and there was in his eyes a look so hard and cold that I shivered. Would Horace ever look at me like that?

After dinner they played bridge until midnight. I play very badly, for I have never cared for it, but Frank Carrington

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was my partner, and as he is an expert we won by a few points.

I have never seen Edith more brilliant and more fascinating; she was full of keen repartee, and her clear laugh rang out again and again. And yet I felt in it that note of disillusionment, of mirthlessness, that I had noticed when I first came.

At last they were all gone, and she took me up to my room.

"I'm not coming in—I know you are tired. Good-night."

So, still she did not want to talk.

Wonderingly I lay there, unable to sleep. I had come here expecting to find Edith living alone with her children, in strict seclusion, a crushed, broken-hearted woman. That was what her letter implied; and now . . .

And the children—why had she sent them away? Then I thought of the conversation over the telephone—and the flowers!

From somewhere a clock struck two,

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and still I lay awake. Suddenly there was a soft rustle in the hall and then a faint knock. I opened the door to find Edith standing there in a long, flowing gown.

"I knocked softly, so, if you were asleep, I wouldn't wake you," she explained nervously.

"No, I haven't been asleep. Come in and let me put something around you—you'll take cold that way."

"Oh, I'll not take cold—though it wouldn't matter if I did," bitterly. She threw herself on the couch and looked at me with hard, brilliant eyes.

"Mary, I want to talk. It will be easier now than in the morning. Do you know that for the last two months I have wanted to come to New York just to see you—to talk to you? There were times when I felt I should go mad if I didn't talk to some one, and you are the only woman I trust."

"Then why didn't you come, dear?" I

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asked gently. "You know if there is anything I could do——"

"Oh, there is nothing you can do except listen. You needn't even trouble to give me advice, for I shouldn't take it—one never does. But you can listen—you can let me *talk*. Can you understand how that will help me?"

"Yes, dear, I think I can." And I thought of how Helen Chandler had said the same thing.

She was walking up and down the room now, just as Helen had done when she cried out that she wanted to go to her husband, that he was alone in that awful, silent graveyard—and he could never bear to be alone—that she wanted to go to him, with her hands to dig down and down till she came to his coffin, and then to lie there with him.

There was something in this atmosphere that brought that scene back. I felt the same faintness coming over me. Was there not enough anguish in my own life?

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Why should fate make me share that of other women?

"I want to begin at the beginning so you will understand." She was still walking back and forth. "You have always thought my marriage a happy one, haven't you? You have always thought Frank a kind and indulgent husband? That was what I tried to make you think—what I tried to make every one think—and I believe I succeeded. But it was all a lie! For the nine years of our marriage I have been living a lie. From the very first he was cruel and unfaithful, shamelessly unfaithful. I believe now that he never loved me. And any love I had for him he has long since killed.

"But I resolved that no one should know—that before the world we should stand as a happy couple. And for all these years I have acted that rôle, partly for the children's sake and partly for my own. But six months ago something happened—something that crushed out of me all the



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*good* that was left. And from that time *I haven't cared!*

"I think my pride, my reserve, my quiet ignoring of all that he did, has always exasperated him—my 'damned superiority' and my 'damned virtuousness,' he calls it. Again and again he has tried to humiliate me, but I have been impervious to all his insults until this happened:

"About ten o'clock one night he drove up here in an automobile with a flashy light-opera singer—*his mistress!* A man-about-town and another actress were with them. *And he forced me to receive them, and to have Jane serve a supper!* He must have told the woman I was not at home, or she would not have come. For underneath her attempted bravado she was nervous and ill at ease, and I think, too, that she pitied me, which was the most intolerable part of all. But I carried it off well—she showed far more confusion than I. No one would have thought I was entertaining my husband's mistress,

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and that I knew every one at the table was perfectly aware that I *knew* who she was.

“But that was not all. I think he was furious because I was not confused, because I treated them with cool courtesy instead of making some vulgar display of temper. It seems inconceivable, and yet I really believe that was what he wanted. Of course, they had all been drinking, but not enough but that he knew clearly what he was doing. And so he began to tell stories—vile stories—and to watch their effect upon me.

“There was a shining knife beside my plate; I felt my fingers closing over it. I knew then if I stayed I would try to kill him. I made some excuse to get something from the dining-room—he had ordered the supper served in the library. I slipped out, ran up to my room, threw something around me and came down the back stairs through the basement and out into the street.”

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She threw herself on the couch now, and her eyes grew more hard and more defiant. It was several moments before she went on.

“What I did after that was not planned. I was in no condition to plan. Blinded, maddened, crazed, I followed the first impulse that came to me. I went straight to the rooms of a man who I knew had long cared for me. No word of love had ever been spoken between us, yet I knew that he cared. By chance I knew his address—bachelor quarters in an old-fashioned residence on Beacon Hill.

“I found the whole house dark except a faint, green light shining through the shutters of the second floor. By the dim street-lamp I read the names on the brass plates in the entry. The second floor was his. I rang the bell. There was no answer; desperately I rang again and again. Then came the tapping sound of the door being unlatched from above. But I would not open it—I wanted him to come down.

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So I rang again. Then I heard steps on the stairs—and the door opened. He stood there in a smoking-jacket, a cigar in his hand.

“ ‘Mrs. Carrington!’

“For a moment I could not speak. He said again: ‘Mrs. Carrington!’

“Then I laughed hysterically. ‘Yes. Is it too late to call? I thought you might be pleased—I——’

“He came out into the vestibule, where he could see me more plainly.

“ ‘What is it—what has happened?’ sternly.

“I don’t remember just what I said, but it was something hysterical about thinking it would be interesting to make a midnight call. ‘You don’t seem very hospitable,’ I persisted. ‘Aren’t you going to—to ask me in?’

“ ‘No!’

“ ‘Why?’

“ ‘It isn’t necessary to say why. If you will wait here I will get my coat and take

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you home. Or if there is any reason why you won't go home, I will take you to your sister-in-law's, or anywhere that you will be safe.'

"He took my silence for consent and hurried upstairs. I waited until I knew he was in his rooms, and then *I followed him!* In his haste he had left the door of the front room open. I went in without knocking. It was a large, high-ceilinged room. There were a number of deer-heads on the wall and some large fur-rugs on the floor. The only light was a green-shaded lamp on the table. I don't know why I noticed these things then, but I did.

"I crossed over to a large leather chair by the table. I could hear him moving about in the adjoining room. In a moment he came through with his hat and coat. He did not see me and would have hurried down had I not spoken.

"I don't know what either of us said after that, but I know that all his reasonings were of no avail. *I stayed!* Do you

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know, Mary, that when a good woman—a woman who has been good all her life—at last becomes desperate, she can be far more desperate than a woman who at heart is half bad? Well, it is true. I proved it that night.

“Remorse—shame—repentance? As yet I have felt none of those things. Of course, I am not happy, but in some ways I am happier than I have ever been.

“And I know if God is just—if He knows all that I have endured all these years of my marriage—He will not register even one little mark against me for this thing. Mary, I believe that fully.

“As for any duty or loyalty to Frank—if I ever owed him any—don’t you think I have paid it over and over again? In the nine years we have been married he has had a dozen mistresses, and has subjected me to inconceivable insults. And yet through all those awful years I was a true and faithful wife, and would be still, had he not finally goaded me deliber-

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ately to desperation. Do you think I still owe him anything—*do* you?

“As for the children”—the bitterness died out of her voice—“I know I have wronged them—nothing can ever make that right. But for that I must answer to myself and to them, and,” defiantly, “to no one else.

“That is all there is to tell. I have told you because I had to tell some one, and I could trust no one else. It may make a difference in our friendship; if it does, I am sorry; but even had I known it would—I think I would still have told you.”

I went over and sat by the couch where she lay and took both her hands. “It will make no difference, Edith—you ought to know that. The only thing to be considered is your best happiness. Things can’t go on indefinitely this way.”

“Why?” defiantly.

“I can’t tell you why, dear, except that I know they cannot. Don’t you feel that, too?”

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She turned her face away. "Of course I feel it," hopelessly, "but what can I do now?"

"Does he love you very much, Edith? Is it a great love that he gives you?"

"I think it is," in a low voice.

"Then why don't you get your freedom, dear," I asked gently, "and marry him?"

She hesitated, and a faint color crept into her face. "Because of the children, and because Frank wouldn't let me have it now. He would bring this—counter-charge."

"Surely he wouldn't want to hold you if—if——"

"Oh, yes, he would. You don't know the man. He wants to hold me to further humiliate and torture me."

"You don't mean he knows this and still wants to hold you——"

"That is just what I do mean. Of course, he doesn't know *all*, but he knows enough to use it as an additional way of



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torturing me. He takes a fiendish delight in saying insinuating things that cut through me like a jagged knife. At last he can make me shrink and cringe—he never could before.

“Of course, if I were openly indiscreet, if I became talked about—a subject of discussion at the clubs—he would not tolerate that. He would get the divorce himself, bringing upon me all the disgrace he could, taking the children from me, and seeing that the decree forbid me to marry again. But as long as I am discreet, and he has this lash to hold over me, he is well satisfied.”

I shuddered. “And I have always thought him a kindly man!”

“To other people he *is*. That is the strange part of it all. It is only to me that he is a fiend. If he had married some other woman he might have made her a good husband. But from the very first I seemed to have aroused in him the desire to crush—to subject me, and that has

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grown upon him until it has become an obsession. Whatever I did was done unconsciously. In looking back now I think it was partly because I shrank from him in a physical way. I think it was that which first aroused all the demon, all the brutality that was in him."

She started up with a cry: "Oh, God! what I've been through! You don't know—you *can't* know! How could you," fiercely—"you in your quiet, happy marriage? Do you ever stop to realize how happy you are—how good fate has been to you? Of all the people I know, I know of just two really happy marriages, and yours is one of them. You never think of it that way, do you? You take it as a matter of course. Oh, no, it is not happiness, but anguish that makes one fully conscious."

My hands clenched tight the arm of the chair. Could I bear anything more? If she would only leave me now—before I broke down. She had again thrown her-

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self on the couch, her arm over her face, motionless except for the lace at her throat, which stirred with her convulsive breathing.

When at length she arose, she moved wearily toward the door. All the excitement had died out of her voice now.

"I may never be able to speak of this again, Mary, but I want you to know that I am glad I have told you—that it has helped me some—as much as anything could now."

The next day I left about noon. She made no effort to keep me. In no way was any reference made to the night before. It was as though it had not been.

## CHAPTER VI

September 8th

EVERYTHING seems so strange since I came back. All my views of life seem altered. I cannot explain what I feel.

My thoughts are full of Edith Carrington. What will become of her? How will it end? What will be her future? Can I do nothing to help her? I am haunted by the thought that I said nothing that night—that I made no effort to influence her. And yet what could I have said? How cheap and futile any moralizing would have seemed! Before the great tragedies of life how powerless one feels! I can only wait, and hope that if she needs me she will let me know.

September 9th

I am filled with love and tenderness for Horace. In spite of all that I have suf-

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ferred I know that he is a kind man—a *good* man. I think of Frank Carrington's fiendish brutality, and then I think of my own husband's kindliness, and thoughtfulness, and unfailing courtesy, and I am more content than I have been for months. From now on I am going to forget that there is another woman in his life, and to remember only that he is kind to me, and that he always will be.

September 11th

How my feelings and convictions change from day to day! A few days ago, influenced by the memory of Frank Carrington's cruelty, I thought I would be content with Horace's kindness. And now I am not content. I don't even understand how I could ever have thought I would be. Something happened to-day that brought back all my jealousy and bitterness. I want my husband's *love*. How could I ever think I would be satisfied with less?

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September 12th

Ellen has broken a large cut-glass bowl. She just now brought it to me in tears. A year ago I would have been greatly distressed, but to-day I was not conscious of being even sorry. I simply didn't *care*. I only said mechanically: "You must be more careful, Ellen." The girl looked astonished, but infinitely relieved, and hurried away.

*I didn't care.* Somehow I feel that if everything we own were destroyed, still I would not care. Since *this* trouble has come into my life, of how little consequence any other misfortune seems! I look back with wonder on the things that used to worry me—the details of the house and servants. How trivial they seem now!

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, September 13th

Oh, I am so lonely, so desolate, so heart-sick! I have come to look upon Sunday afternoon with inexpressible dread. He is always away and I am always alone.

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I know that I am alone during the week, but the loneliness of Sunday has a horror of its own. The very silence and desertion of the street, and even the atmosphere of the buildings seem to add to it. I cannot sew or read or plan about the house as I try to during the week. More than ever I am possessed with a feverish unrest. Sometimes I force myself to go out for a walk, but the quiet streets and closed shops only add to my depression. The few people one meets are always in couples; sometimes they have children with them, happy in the prospect of a holiday. I think that is what I feel most—that Sunday is the day that brings families and lovers together. Only I am alone.

And the long twilight is so horrible, without even the distraction of dinner to look forward to. We dine at one on Sundays, so Ellen can have her afternoon off. Horace never comes home now for tea, and I do without it rather than have it alone.

I spend the hours wandering about the

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house, hoping vaguely that the bell or telephone will ring. I hardly know what I am longing for. It is not that I have even the faintest hope that he might telephone or send me some message (as he used to do) that he was coming to take me driving, and for me to be ready. It has been over a year since he has done that, and I know in my heart he never will again. The few places he takes me now are laboriously arranged for in advance; there is never any unexpected trips or outings.

September 14th

I have been looking at one of my old photographs, taken the year before I was married. It is a girlish picture in a simple low-necked gown with some flowers at my waist. It is the same picture that Horace carried with him all during our engagement. He had it cut down so it would fit in his breast-pocket, and even long after we were married he always kept it there.

On the back is written in pencil the date



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I gave it to him—June 6, 1889. It is so faint now that it can hardly be read, and there are five words after the date that I cannot make out at all. What do they say? What had he written there? The last word looks like "life," but it is so vague I cannot be sure. I tried a magnifying glass, but even that could not make it clear. What are those words? I know it can make no difference now. Whatever the loving phrase he wrote then, it can have no meaning now. And yet I so long to know what it is.

I think my strongest feeling, as I looked at the rounded, youthful face that was once mine, was one of bitterest jealousy, almost of hatred. Could I have retained that beauty, I could have retained Horace's love. And yet in every other way I know I have gained. I know that at heart I am less selfish and thoughtless than I was then, and that the love I give Horace now is a far greater, deeper, purer love than what I gave him then.

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But how little all that counts beside a pink and white skin and golden hair!

Had Horace ceased to care for me then, in a few years I could probably have learned to love some one else, but now——

One is so rarely honest, even with one's self, that I take a certain grim pleasure in being honest here—in admitting that while many would have sought me then, none would seek me now. But if some one *should*? If Horace should leave me, and, in spite of my gray hair and tired face, some other man offered me love and marriage—would it help me? Yes, I believe it would *help* me. And I might marry him. I believe in my heart that any woman under those circumstances would, though not one in a million would admit it. But if I am honest in saying this, I am equally honest in saying that whatever happened I could never *love* any one but Horace. Twenty years ago I could, but now I never could. That is what

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association does for a woman. How differently it affects a man!

At last I tore the picture into shreds. I never wanted to see it again, and above all I never wanted Horace to see it. The change has come so gradually, he may not realize the startling difference which that picture would recall.

September 15th

This evening, just as we finished dinner, Persia came into the dining-room, carrying one of her little kittens, and laid it at Horace's feet. In spite of all my care and petting, I think she has always been more fond of Horace than of me. And now she stood there looking up at him wistfully, proud of her kitten and wanting him to see it.

"Why, what have we here?" Horace laughed as he stooped over and picked it up. The little thing lay mewling in his hand, while Persia rubbed happily back and forth against his chair.

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I came over beside him and stroked the kitten. "Isn't it a dear little thing? It's so soft and warm and—cuddlesome."

Horace laughed. "Yes, I should say it was all that. And it seems a pretty sleek, well-fed little beggar. Are the rest of your family like this, Persia, or have you brought out the best as a sample?"

"Oh, Persia takes excellent care of them all. When she isn't feeding them she's polishing them, and often I find her doing both."

As I leaned over to pet the kitten, which was now clinging fast to Horace's sleeve, I was nearer him than I had been for days. Just the touch of his coat, of his hand, as for an instant ours met against the kitten's soft fur, made my pulses throb. I felt the warm color rush to my face and forced myself to draw back, lest I yield to the wild longing to slip down into his arms.

I walked over to the window as though to adjust the shades. When I turned

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again Horace was putting the kitten carefully on the floor. Persia hovered over it for a moment, licking its little face so ardently that it tumbled over, then she picked it up and carried it away.

It was only a trivial incident, but it seemed to have brought us a little nearer each other. Later I went down to the basement, where Persia has her family. "Persia," I whispered, as I stooped over the box, stroking her and her kittens impartially, "bring another one of your babies up to Horace some time."

September 17th

To-day I held in my hand one of her letters. And I had not the courage to open it. It was not honor. I shall not deceive myself by that pretext—I do not think I even thought of that. It was fear, *abject fear!* The certainty—the *proof*—of his infidelity that I felt that letter held, would be more horrible than the uncertainty, the possibility of some other ex-

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planation, that at times I still cling to. The letter came about three o'clock. It was a special delivery. The maid by mistake brought it to me.

"Why, this is for Mr. Kennedy," I said, and was handing it back to her, when a faint perfume reached me, soft and subtle, the perfume I knew so well.

"Never mind, Ellen, I will take it to Mr. Kennedy myself."

When the maid had gone, I took the letter to my room and locked the door. My hands trembled so I could hardly hold it. The envelope was an ordinary one, and the address was typewritten. But when I held it to the light, I saw the paper inside was tinted note-paper, with an engraved monogram or crest.

I don't know how long I held it before I took it up to my husband. He was in the library. There must have been something strange in my face, for he arose at once and came toward me. "Why, Mary, what is the matter?" Then he saw the

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letter in my hand. Without answering I laid it on the table and left the room. A few moments later I heard the front door open and close. Without a word of explanation to me—he had obeyed her summons. He had left me to think what I chose.

September 18th

She had purposely used a plain type-written envelope—on my account. Had he warned her to do that? Since that letter came yesterday, I have been able to think of but one thing—the hideous possibilities of their attitude toward me. For the first time I realized that they must have *talked* about me. They must have discussed ways of meeting or writing so *I* would not know. That my husband should talk of me to another woman! I have been dragged through the very mire of shame and ignominy.

September 19th

*How* do they talk about me? What do they say? Does he speak of me as “my

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wife" or as "Mrs. Kennedy?" What does he tell her? Does he say that we have grown apart—that I no longer care? *Does she question him about me? Does he allow that? And does he answer her questions?* How intensely curious she must be about the woman who is his wife! For two nights I have lain awake torturing myself with the thought of all the intimate, personal things she might ask him. She may even know of my suffering and exult in her triumph; or does she *pity* me? Oh, what must I do—*what can I do?* If there is a God how can such things be?

September 20th

I have been reading some books on the various New Thought religions, trying to get some comfort from their theory that all is mind and divine love. But it all seems so personal and abstract. I want the warm human love of my husband—the strength of his arms around me. The



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thought that some other woman lies there is killing me.

September 22d

Edith Carrington was here to-day. She stayed only a few hours, returning to Boston on the evening train. I did not know she was coming—she had not written or telegraphed—and I was out when she came. At first she explained nervously that she had come over to do some shopping, and we talked for some time in a strained way. Then she said abruptly:

“Mary, I didn’t come to shop, I came to talk to you. I thought it might help me—it did before.”

“Nothing has happened?” I felt my heart sink with the old sickening sense of dread.

“Nothing definite, but I’m so worried and unhappy. Oh, I don’t know what to do!”

I waited. I had no heart to question her.

“You know you said things couldn’t

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go on this way indefinitely. I suppose in my heart I had some wild hope that they could, but I know now they cannot. I live in continual fear of some exposure—some crisis. And the most horrible part of all is that I feel whatever happens I will have to go through it *alone*. It is that sense of standing so alone that terrifies me.”

“But surely, Edith——”

“Oh, I know what you are going to say—that *he* should stand with me and protect and shield me. And of course he would in every material way; but still I would be *alone*. How can I explain it so you will understand? If I say that I feel he is drawing away from me, that will give an impression that is much too strong, and will make you wholly misjudge him. He isn’t drawing away from me in any *tangible* way. It is all so subtle I don’t know how to put it into words. I only know that the more I cling to him

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—the more I show my need of him—the farther away he seems.”

“You mean he—he doesn’t love you as he did?”

“In some ways I think he loves me more. But I feel that he doesn’t want the *responsibility of my future*. And when I show that I am clinging to him too much, in some subtle way I feel that he is drawing back. It is nothing tangible that he says or does, but still I have that feeling, and it hurts—it *hurts!*”

“And that is where I have paid. Had I not gone to him that night, or had I let him take me home as he wanted to, I could have secured my divorce and he would have been eager to marry me. But that night I was desperate; I had no thought of the future. And now—now I feel that everything is different.”

“You don’t mean that if you were free he would hesitate to marry you now because of—of *this?*”

“No, I don’t mean quite that. That is

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such a ghastly way of putting it. But if he married me now it would be because he felt he owed it to me, and not because he wanted me to be his wife more than he wanted anything else in the world. Of course, he would never admit that, but I *know*! He would never admit, either, that he does not respect me in quite the same way, and yet I feel that he does not. He has done nothing to make me say this; in every way he is as delicate and chivalrous and tender with me as he ever was, and yet I know deep in his heart it is not the same—and it never can be.

“Oh, there is something insidious, corrosive, about a love like this to a woman like me. I pay for every moment of our happiness with hours of scorching shame. And I cannot understand it, for theoretically I feel that it is *right*—that I have every right to live my life as I choose. As for any sense of disloyalty to Frank, I have none,” scornfully. “Oh, no, I have

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no feeling about *that*. And yet there is a feeling here"—she pressed her clenched hands against her breast—"that I cannot crush out."

"Edith, if you feel that, you must end it. Can't you see the price you are paying is too great?"

"Oh, I know—I know; but I have grown to love him a thousand times more than I did. The very bond which brings this sense of degradation has made me love him more. All the years of my marriage have been so hideous, I never knew until he taught me what love could mean; and now, now—I cannot give him up. It would kill me."

Again I stood baffled, helpless. What could I say? What could I do? Sadly I watched her leave, knowing it would be useless to ask her to stay. And when she had gone I was filled with that same sense of failure, of lost opportunity, that had haunted me when I returned from Boston.

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September 23d

"The more I cling to him, the more I show my need of him, the farther away he seems. . . . In some subtle way I feel that he is drawing back." Those words of Edith Carrington's have been haunting me all day. I feel that in them are held most of the tragedies of women's lives.

September 24th

A cynically clever man once told me that to every one some sort of "prop" was necessary. The strongest, he said, was religion; the others were love, work, whisky. His, he said, was whisky; that it was the most reliable. Women, he claimed, first tried love; when that failed them they turned either to religion or drink.

Perhaps they do; but does either give them healing for a broken heart?

## CHAPTER VII

2 A. M., September 26th

I CANNOT sleep. It is torture to lie there thinking—thinking. Perhaps it will help me to write. It is horrible to have to “fight” for sleep as I do now night after night. One after another I try all the means, the tricks I have ever heard of that are said to induce sleep. I count thousands, repeat the alphabet backward, picture innumerable sheep jumping over a fence, repeat all the poems I have ever memorized—until my brain reels from exhaustion, and at last I sink into a sort of stupor.

One method is to think of objects disconnectedly—to name things rapidly, things that are entirely foreign to each

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other, as desk, wine, mountain, cathedral, sign, pear, clock, etc. It is the confusion and weariness that this causes that finally bring sleep.

But there are nights when, try as I will, I cannot keep my mind on any of these methods. After a few moments' effort I find myself back thinking of *her*—always of her.

The sounds of the nights! They may not be sad in themselves, but for me, as I lie listening through the long, sleepless hours, they have come to have an inexpressible mournfulness. The hoarse shriek of distant ferry-boats, long-drawn-out like the cry of some haunted wild thing, the sound of dragging hoofs of weary cab horses, the faint rumble of the elevated, and always in the background, if one listens intently, comes that subdued night whisper of the city—the great, seething city—which even in its sleep is restless and murmurous.



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September 27th

How strange a thing is love! There has never been a moment in all these fifteen years of our married life that I have not loved Horace deeply, completely. And yet for the last ten years up to a year ago, my love had become a quiet, contented affection. In these years I did not pick up his clothes, his brushes, his gloves, and kiss them as I did in the first few years, and as I do now. I did not wait for his coming with throbbing pulse and flushed cheeks, and thrill at his slightest touch, as I did in the first few years, and as I do *now*. The constant companionship of so many years had taken away that feverish intensity and brought in its place a deep, quiet contentment. But now—now that I feel I am losing him—all the intensity, all the feverishness of our early love has returned. I love him now as I loved him in the first year of our marriage.

Oh, how strange it all is—and how pitiful! Why should life ordain things so?

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September 28th

The horror of these long evenings alone is eating into my very soul. Alone—alone—always alone! It has come to be more than a sense of desolation; there are times when I am filled with a haunting dread, a fear, a nameless terror of I know not what. Oh, Horace! if you *knew* what I suffered you would not leave me so much alone—you *could* not, even though you no longer love me; your very humanity would make you want to help me.

September 30th

*Last night I walked the streets until after midnight!* I had reached the stage where I could be alone not one moment longer. I left the house as though I was fleeing from something. I do not know where I went—blindly I walked on and on, with an endurance I have never known before. I had no thought of danger, or of the strangeness of the thing I was doing. I only felt impelled to go on—on!

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Just the streets, the passing people, seemed to help me. Sometimes I found myself in a neighborhood of small shops with cheerful lighted windows; again I would pass through blocks of grave, silent houses, dark but for an occasional light in an upper room; then again by some small square, with dim lights shining through the dark trees, lighting up some bench on which huddled a sleeping tramp.

On and on I walked, until both mind and body seemed numbed into a sort of unfeeling weariness. Suddenly, high up in the darkness, before me shone an illuminated clock-tower—it was midnight! I took the first car-line I came to—an old, jangling horse-car—and found I was far on the East Side and that I must change twice before I could get back home.

How strange and unfamiliar our house seemed when at last I stood before it! I had a sense of having been away for a great length of time. When I unlocked the door and entered the dim hall,

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Horace's hat and coat were there. In a dazed way I stared at them; that he might come home first had not occurred to me. And then slowly came the thought—he knew I was not at home—I, who had never before been outside of the house alone at night—and he had not cared! He was not even worried—he had gone calmly to bed!

I think my first impulse was to go out again into the night—to wander on and on, never to come back—in some way to go out of his life forever. But the physical weariness that claimed me was too strong. I was faint and dizzy—I could go no farther now. Perhaps to-morrow . . . To-morrow I would go away. . . .

Through blinding tears I groped for the banisters and dragged myself up the stairs. Half way up I stumbled and fell. I made no effort to rise. A wave of such weakness, such hopelessness, such utter misery, swept over me that I wanted to lie there—just to lie there, never to move

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again. After a while I was conscious of a dusty odor from the thick carpet beneath my cheek, and found myself thinking dully that Ellen must sweep the stairs better, and then I could have laughed aloud at the irony of the thought.

Suddenly a door opened from above, and a flood of light came out. I knew it was Horace, but I did not move—I did not seem to care. Whether he saw me or not made no difference to me then.

“Mary! *Mary!*” He was beside me, trying to raise me up. “What has happened—why are you *here?*”

I did not answer. It was not resentment or bitterness that kept me silent; it was only a great indifference. I think my ability to suffer or feel anything more just then was deadened. I was curiously calm and quiet.

“I thought you were in bed. What does this mean?” He had half carried me into my room. “What is it, Mary—are you ill?”

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Are you ill? That is what he always says; never—are you unhappy, are you lonely, heartsick, miserable; but always—are you ill?

“Mary, you must answer me—are you *ill?*”

“No; I am only *drunk!*”

What made me say that I shall never know. I did not even know I was saying it until I heard the words. I suppose it was a form of hysteria, and yet at that moment I felt so curiously quiet. I did not look up at Horace. I do not know what horror or incredulity his face expressed, but his hands trembled as he held mine. With a strange, impersonal interest I wondered what he would say. It seemed a long while before he spoke.

“Mary, of course I know what you said is not true. I don’t know why you said it, or what this all means. But I believe you are ill, and you must let me send for Dr. Martin.”

“I am not ill,” I answered very quietly,

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“and I shall not see Dr. Martin. But I am very tired; if you will leave me now, I should like to go to bed.”

I let my clothes drop from me and slipped into bed. Rest—sleep—the need was imperative; I had no other thought. That strange thing I said was in a way true; there are so many things besides wine that can make one drunk. Joy can, if it is great enough, and so can misery.

Again Horace came in and stood beside the bed. “Mary, I want you to promise that if you are wakeful or nervous during the night you will call me. I will leave the door open.”

“Very well,” I murmured.

Still he hesitated. “I want you to promise, Mary. I want to be sure that if you need me you will call.”

“I promise,” I answered wearily. And I remember nothing more. I must have fallen asleep while he stood there.

It was very late when I awoke. Ellen brought up a breakfast-tray, which I sent

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back untouched. She said Mr. Kennedy had left word that I was not to be awakened, and that he would call up during the day to know how I was.

October 6th

Horace has been at home every evening this week. A few months ago this would have made me very happy, would have filled me with hope, with the belief that he was coming back to me, that the cloud that had so long darkened my life was to be lifted. But I cannot believe that now. I feel that it is only a temporary thing, that he is staying with me now because that night he had a glimpse into the depths of my despondency. But when the memory of that is less vivid, when he thinks I am better and that he can safely leave me to myself again, I feel that it will be just as it was before.

October 10th

I have been afraid to open this journal in these last few days, afraid to record the



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hope that is quivering within me, afraid that it will only deepen my suffering when the change comes. . . . And yet for twelve days, now, he has been with me every evening—*twelve days!* . . .

October 13th

*And I had let myself hope.* . . .

October 14th

Sometimes I try to comfort myself with the thought that in a few years it will not matter whether I have been happy or unhappy—whether I have been loved or neglected. After all, life is so short—any condition is only temporary. Why, then, should we fight and struggle so? I have often heard people who have taken uncomfortable rooms or been forced into an uncongenial neighborhood say: “It is only for a short time—we can put up with anything for a little while; next year we are going abroad.” The thought that it is only

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for a "short while" makes almost anything endurable. And yet life itself is only a "short while." If I would always think of it like this I would be more reconciled.

But how rarely one considers life in that way; we are constantly striving for some "permanent happiness," for conditions that we think of as enduring.

Now and then, by the death of a friend or relative, we are brought suddenly to realize how "short a time" it is. But in a few days we are again planning, striving, straining for some condition, some goal, with an eagerness and anxiety as though it were for all eternity, and not merely for a "short while," a few years at most, and perhaps only a few months.

I am marking this page by folding down the corner. I want to turn to this again and again. I feel if I can keep this thought before me—that it is only for a "short while," that in a few years it will make no difference—I will not suffer so.

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October 15th

When I went down to the kitchen this morning to give some orders to Ellen, I noticed on the pantry door a large lithograph calendar she had hung there. It was an advertisement of a well-known soap, and represented a young woman with a face flawlessly pink and white; and underneath: "Creates and preserves a perfect complexion."

Instinctively I glanced in a small glass Ellen keeps over the icebox. Oh, the contrast—the ghastly contrast!

"Ellen, where did that calendar come from?" I asked sharply.

"The grocer's clerk gave it to me, ma'am. It's a real pretty one, isn't it?"

"No; I think it hideous. I don't see why you want to disfigure your pantry with such cheap, gaudy advertisements. If you want a calendar, I will get you one; but do take that thing down."

Poor Ellen, how bewildered and distressed she looked. She has been with us

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five years, and her devotion to me is unswerving. But I know she often wonders what has so changed her once cheerful, practical and wholly reasonable mistress to a sad and distraught woman, absent-minded and forgetful, and who is at times even strangely irritable and unjust.

Afterward I felt very much ashamed of my sharpness about the calendar. Have I really become so bitter and so warped that I cannot bear to sit beside a young and beautiful woman on the car, or even see one pictured on a lithograph? Has my brooding over my age, my growing unloveliness, brought me to this?

October 16th

From a car window to-day I saw a wretched gray horse in an old wagon driven by a couple of boys. It seemed almost too weak to stand, and yet it was being mercilessly whipped into a lame gallop. For just a second I caught sight of a great, raw sore from beneath its col-

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lar, and, on the leather where it rubbed against the sore was a dark, sickening stain. Frantically I rang the bell, but it was another block before the car stopped, and then it was too late. In the mass of traffic the horse was nowhere to be seen. It may have been driven down either of the side streets. I questioned a policeman on the corner, but he had not noticed it—they never do. All day I have been haunted by the thought of that wretched animal. If only I could have overtaken it, had the driver arrested and the poor thing shot or cared for.

But why must I always see such things? Why can I never go on the street without seeing and suffering with every wretched, starved, over-burdened horse. If it has a sore back or a lame leg, or is being driven until its head hangs in abject misery, I must always see it. Other people do not—they pass by unnoticing, indifferent. How can they be so blind, so callous, to the suffering of horses—poor dumb, patient, help-

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less beasts? Oh, how cruelly so many of them are treated! Not the valuable, spirited horse, but the worn-out wretches that have worked so long and so hard, until they can be bought for a mere pittance; and their owners think it cheaper to starve and overload them to a slow, torturous death, and then to buy another equally cheap and doom it to the same fate, than to feed and care for them humanely.

How my heart aches for those pitiable animals so often seen in pedlers' and cheap express wagons! Sometimes when one is standing by the curb, if I stop to stroke its thin, scarred neck, it will turn to look at me with meek, appealing eyes, as though begging me to release it from its misery.

Oh, if I could only gather them all in my arms—all those poor old horses, with their bent knees, their sore backs, their whip-streaked sides—and carry them away to some green pasture, where they would not be goaded and lashed to further tor-

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ture, but could end their days in the peace and rest they have more than earned by years of hard and faithful work.

October 17th

Lillian Russell is playing here now. To-day I went to the *matinée*. I went for one reason only—to see if she had retained her youth and beauty to the marvelous degree the papers claimed. I secured a seat as near the stage as possible—the fifth row of the orchestra. When she came on I was astonished—no, it needs a stronger word than that—*astounded* is better. It was a young woman—a *young* woman—that graciously greeted the applause. And yet I knew her to be as old if not older than I. I knew that she has a married daughter and is a grandmother. Of course, she was made up, but I allowed for that; without it she would still have been young. And that was Lillian Russell whom I had seen twenty years before, whose picture has been on cigar-boxes for

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as many years or more! I watched her jealously as she moved gracefully around the stage, smiling, winning, confident of her charm. Her rôle was that of a young girl, and she gave it all the exuberance and lightness of youth, executing in one act something verging on a skirt-dance. And it was all done with ease and grace, never for a moment seeming ridiculous or even inappropriate.

I thought of myself or any of the other middle-aged women sitting around me going through the same antics—how hideously absurd we would seem! I don't know why I torture myself with such thoughts, but I do. All the way home I was picturing myself in that part, lashing myself with the thought of how ridiculous I would have looked.

What was her secret? Why had I faded, while the years left her almost untouched? The life of an actress must be hard—harder than that of a shielded, sheltered woman. And yet invariably they



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retain their youth longer. Massage and constant care may do a great deal, but I believe it is, after all, the nervous tension itself, the continual change and excitement, the very intensity of living, that keeps them young.

October 19th

I read this sentence in a book to-day: "There is nothing more pitiful in life than the sight of a woman on her knees trying to fan into life a love that has grown cold."

. . . A woman on her knees trying to fan into life a love that has grown cold! And that is what I have been doing for months. . . .

October 20th

There are moments in every woman's life that are unforgettable, that even in years long after are lived over and over again.

What a wonderful document it would be if a few women would write honestly of what was the most supreme moment of their lives, of the moment that stood

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out above all others in haunting vividness!

In my own life there have been two moments so great that sometimes I feel if there had been nothing else, life would still have been worth living for—just for those.

One was after the birth of our child, when Horace was first allowed to see me. The nurse opened the door for him and then went out, closing it after her—leaving us alone. Oh, the *look* in his eyes as he came toward the bed and knelt beside me! I think he whispered my name, "Mary!" but that was all. And even had I not been too weak to talk I know he would not have spoken. It was a moment for which there were no words. I can still feel the dear pressure of his face against my hand, still thrill at something warm and moist that fell there, and at the slight roughness of his lips and cheek, which I knew meant two days' neglected shaving. For the nurse had told me that in the forty-eight hours I had been unconscious

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he had hardly left the hall, where tirelessly he walked back and forth before my door.

The other moment was in the old Fifth Avenue Hotel a few weeks before our marriage. I was standing on an upper flight of the wide, rep-carpeted stairs, and Horace was coming slowly, reluctantly up toward me, with a pale, stern face and defiant, blazing eyes. Every detail of that picture is burned forever in my memory. A large, old-fashioned gas-chandelier with cut-glass pendants hung in the hall above; it shone direct on Horace as he came toward me, throwing a circle of light over the high, white wall and part of the dark mahogany banisters, leaving the rest in gloom.

That was the moment—but the hour before had made it what it was.

Father had come to New York on some political business, and had brought me with him to buy my trousseau. We were at the Fifth Avenue, where he had stopped for years. That night he was out at some

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meeting. Tired from a day's shopping, I had slipped into negligee and was sitting by one of the long, low windows, looking out at the lights in Madison Square, thinking dreamily of Horace, and of our new life, now so near, when there came a sharp knock at the door. It was a bellboy with a card—Horace's card!

The blood flew to my face. He was there—downstairs! I told the boy to say I would be down in a few moments. And then with a rush came the thought, why need I dress and go down? He was my fiancé—why could I not receive him as I was, up here? Father had taken a two-room suite, and one of the rooms was a private parlor, except for a large folding-bed. I caught a glimpse of myself in the long mirror between the windows; the pale pink negligee I was wearing was far more becoming than any dress. Quickly I rang for another boy and told him to ask Mr. Kennedy to come up.

I waited in nervous uncertainty and

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doubt. Had I done right? I, who had always been so shy and conventional—was this conventional? What would he think?

Then came his knock. Tremulously I opened the door, my face suffused with color. In a moment he had me in his arms.

“My darling! this is so dear of you! I never dreamed of having you like this.” He was kissing my hair, my lips, my throat.

With an effort I drew away. “But is it right? Should I have done this? You won’t—you won’t misunderstand——”

Instantly he released me and stepped back. “*Misunderstand?*”

“No—no—I don’t mean that. Of course, I know you won’t. I am over-sensitive, dear, because—just because it is all so near.”

“Dearest!” he whispered tenderly. Then he led me over to a large red-plush sofa. He did not sit down beside me as

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I expected, but drew up a chair. He told me of how he had invented a business trip to New York just to see me; that he was going to stay over to-morrow, and he wanted me to give up shopping for the morning and let him take me for a drive. He had never been more reverential, more reserved. He did not again take me in his arms, nor even kiss me. Instinctively I knew the cause. It was because of what I had implied when he entered—the fear that he might misunderstand. And he was answering me by being far more constrained and reserved than he would have been had I been conventionally gowned in the drawing-room at home.

This very delicacy and restraint made me want his love and caresses more than I had ever wanted them. I slipped my hand timidly through his arm.

“You needn’t be so cold and distant just because I was—very—foolish when you came in.”

“Dear, I’m not cold.”

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"Well, I want to be *noticed*," with a little laugh.

"And am I not noticing you? What do you think I've been doing since I came in—admiring the chandelier?"

"Oh, I hate you when you're—facetious!"

"I'm not facetious, dear. I'm only trying to be as I thought you would rather have me. I thought you were a little self-conscious, and I wanted to put you at ease."

Suddenly, impulsively, I turned and buried my face against his arm.

"Oh, I've missed you so—I've wanted your kisses so!"

"Have you, dear—have you really wanted them?" He had drawn me close to his side now. I could feel his heart beating hard and fast. And yet he did not kiss me. It was as though he was holding me to him, and yet *away* from him.

Something seemed forcing me on—

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forcing me to break down his reserve. As I raised my arm to his shoulder, the lace sleeves fell back and my bare arm brushed his face and neck. I felt him quiver at the touch, and then he drew back, pushing me almost roughly from him.

"But you haven't *kissed* me! I *want* you to kiss me."

"Mary—don't, dear! Let me go—Mary!"

Both of my bare arms were around his neck now, and I was drawing his lips down to mine. Then with a smothered exclamation he crushed me in his arms, kissing me as he had never kissed me before—burning kisses that seemed to scorch.

The pin that held my gown at the neck became unfastened, baring my throat down to the lace of my lingerie. I tried quickly to refasten it, but he forced back my hand, and I felt his burning kisses on my bare neck and shoulders.

With a sick sense of terror—of horror, of something I cannot describe—I



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wrenched myself free and stood before him. I never knew what I said, but they were words of fierce, scathing denunciation, and then my voice broke—I covered my face with my hands.

I heard him walk over to the window. The silence of the room was horrible. When I dropped my hands and looked toward him, he was standing motionless before the window. At length he turned and came toward me.

“I will say good-night, Mary. I know of nothing else to say. I shall not come again until you send for me.”

I saw him walk across the room, take up his hat and turn to the door. Then it closed after him. In the next few moments there swept over me such a wave of understanding, of knowledge, of realization that the fault had been mine—mine—that I alone had been to blame, and that he had been too generous to tell me so! That he had accepted in silence my scath-

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ing rebuke, and left me without a word of defense.

Snatching from the wardrobe a long opera cloak, I threw it around me and rushed down the hall, the wide winding stairs, one flight, then another—and then I saw him still a flight below.

“Horace!” He turned. He made no move toward me. I went down a few more steps, holding fast to the banisters.

And then he came toward me—slowly, reluctantly—his face white, his eyes like burnished steel. *And that was the moment!* The moment in which I first realized the *greatness* of my love for him—of all that it meant—of how completely my happiness, my life, lay in his keeping. Until then I had given him only a young girl’s love, but now it was a woman’s love; and with it came a deep sense of awe and of exaltation.

“Horace,” I whispered, “forgive me——”

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"There is nothing to forgive," he answered quietly, coldly.

He walked up the stairs beside me to my door, and held it open for me. He made no movement to enter; with another cold "Good-night" he would have closed it, had I not touched his arm.

"Horace, I cannot let you go like this. I *love* you! I never knew how much before, Horace!"

He gazed at me steadily. Slowly the cold steel-hardness died out of his eyes. He took both my hands in his; then I felt his lips against my forehead.

"Mary, dear little girl, good-night."

Most of that night I sat by the window, filled with many emotions that I had never known before, and with a love that had grown stronger, deeper and more tender than it had ever been.

October 21st

Sometimes I feel that if through this past year Horace had lied to me in both acts and words, if he had dissembled more,

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pretended that his love for me was unchanged, if he had taken me in his arms and caressed me as he used to do, I might never have *known*. I might still be happy in ignorance of any one else in his life.

To constantly live such a lie would be abhorrent to him. But I do not believe that was his only reason. I believe he has too much reverence for the memories of our past love to desecrate them now by giving me a mere pretense, an empty sham, the reality of which he gives to another woman. Nor will he degrade me by offering me any form of love that with him would no longer be love.

In my heart I respect him for this. But, oh! I have suffered so much! Sometimes I feel that if by not knowing I could have escaped this suffering . . . If it were given me to go back over this year and have him feign for me a love he does not feel—and I live on unknowing—would I have it so? If I did *not know* and did *not suffer*! If I could be made to believe that

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he loved me—and would be happy in that belief, even though it were not true . . . Would I want happiness on such terms? Oh, I don't know—I don't know—I have suffered so much. . . . Heart-hunger and desolation and anguished loneliness have made of me such a coward. If it lay in my power there is no condition I might not welcome if it would only mean cessation from suffering.

October 23d

To-night I took out my marriage certificate and read it over and over. His name and mine—"Horace E. Kennedy and Mary R. Craige are this day united in holy matrimony . . ." How little that means now! And yet it is all I have left—that bit of paper is all that now makes me his wife.

No! no! I do not mean that—I do not believe that! It is not merely that paper—it is these fifteen years of our life together that holds him now. For I know if there had been no ceremony—had I

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lived with him all these years without this certificate—he would still feel the same sense of duty, of obligation, to me that he feels now. He can never forget that I have given him the fifteen best years of my life. A year ago I would have loathed myself for always thinking of that claim, but now I cannot help it. I hug the thought to my heart. I *have* given him my youth, I *have* given the best of my life. No other woman's claim can be as strong as that.

October 24th

In a magazine to-day, I came across a page of well-known people—actors, artists, writers—picturing them as they look now, and as they will look when they are eighty! In each face the artist had cleverly kept the likeness of feature and expression, but distorted it with the wrinkled, shriveled aspect of gaunt old age. It was a ghastly idea, but the magazines now exploit any idea if it be only striking.

Always any thought of age I apply

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to myself. Somehow I have never thought of Horace as ever growing old—in some vague way I have felt that he would always remain the same. But now for the first time I pictured him as old—old! How would he look at eighty? What would he be like? At forty-six he is a strikingly handsome, vigorous, virile man. But what cruel changes will thirty-four years make?

I remember once sitting in the Senate gallery at Washington, and looking down at a very old member, a man who had long been before the public, but who was now in his dotage. He sat there, a pathetic, decrepit figure, leaning tremblingly on his cane, his mouth half open. I was told that age had weakened the muscles of his mouth, and that he habitually held it that way. I remember my feeling of repulsion and pity at the idiotic expression it gave his face. And when later he arose to speak, his voice was painfully shrill and wheezy.

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Will Horace ever be like that—Horace, with his virile strength and his rich, full voice? Oh, no—no—I cannot bear that thought! If only I could throw my arms around him and shield him with my love from a change so merciless.



## CHAPTER VIII

October 25th

COLONEL and Mrs. Crompton, from Washington, are stopping at the Savoy. Last year when Horace had the Stensons' case in the Supreme Court, and was in Washington so often, several times I went with him, and Mrs. Crompton entertained us at dinner, both at her home and at the Willard. This is the first opportunity we have had to return their hospitality, and now I must have them here at least once. But, oh, how I dread it! I shrink so from the thought of trying to entertain now—to give a dinner—to make a pretense at gaiety when my heart is breaking! But if it must be done I am anxious to have it over, so I have invited them for Tuesday. I feel that it might be easier to have some

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one else, so I have asked Mr. and Mrs. Duffield.

I talked with Horace about it this morning, and he has promised to come home early Tuesday and help receive them. I am going to engage a caterer to prepare and serve the dinner. I haven't the heart to look after it myself, and Mary could not do it alone. Oh, how difficult everything seems now—how everything *weighs* upon me. Always before I have taken such keen pleasure in planning and arranging a dinner at home. But now—what does my home mean to me now?

October 27th

Horace misunderstood me; he thought the dinner was for *Thursday*, not Tuesday. When I asked him this morning to be sure not to forget to come home early, so that he would have time to dress before they came, he looked up startled. "Why, it isn't to-night? You said Thursday." As I had not even considered Thursday, I

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don't see how he could have made the mistake. He seemed much worried, said he was not sure that he could come early this evening. I almost cried in my anxiety. I said that he *must*—that I couldn't receive those people alone. All I could make him say was: "I will try to come. I misunderstood the day, and I have made other arrangements, but I will come if I can."

"But if you can't come early, you will at least come in time for dinner?" I persisted excitedly.

"I will if I can, Mary; I told you that."

It took all my self-control to keep from crying out—from demanding why he could not come—from letting go all the accusations and denunciations I have held back for so long.

When he had gone I threw myself on the couch, weak and trembling with the effort of self-restraint. But I knew I must not give way—I must keep up for to-night. It is too late to stop the dinner

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now, and before those guests I must be smiling and self-contained. They must not know—they must not see. . . . If he does not come I must be prepared to make excuses—easy, graceful excuses!

### *Midnight*

The dinner is over—and he did not come. He has not come yet. At eight—just as we were going into the dining-room—he telephoned. Said he was very sorry, but that it would be impossible for him to get here. And then he said good-bye and rang off, before I had time to ask any questions or make any protest. I do not even know where he was when he telephoned. After that I went through the dinner as best I could, but I feel that it was a failure—a pitiful failure. In spite of my attempted gaiety and my carefully careless excuses for Horace, I know they felt something was wrong. There was a forced, constrained atmosphere through the whole evening. And what hurt me

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most was their attempts to *help*—their pretense that they did not see. I presume I ought to be grateful, but it is hard to be pitied. They left early; for that I *was* grateful.

I am writing this hoping it will calm me—that the mere effort of writing will take away some of this feverish bitterness. For I am afraid—afraid that when he comes I shall lose all my self-control, and that at last I shall speak—cry out all that I have been silent about for so long. For I know that he is with her—nothing else would have kept him away. It is for *her* that he let me go through this alone.

November 1st

*I have spoken.* Am I glad or sorry? Has it made things better or worse? I don't know. *I don't know.* I still feel dazed.

It all happened that night—Tuesday night. I haven't written since—I couldn't. It was half-past one when he came home.

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I heard him go straight to his room. My door was open, the light shining out in the hall, and yet he made no effort to come in, to make any explanation. He went direct to his room. If he had only come to my door and made even a pretext at an excuse, I think I would not have spoken. But his quiet ignoring of it all maddened me beyond endurance. The strain of the dinner, the long, feverish wait for him—it had all gone to make me desperate. And now, with a feeling of utter recklessness—a recklessness such as I have never known before—I went to his room and knocked. The door opened; he stood there inquiringly.

“Why did you not come?”

“It was impossible.” His eyes were coldly quiet.

“Why?”

“I told you, Mary, that it was impossible.”

“*Why?*” My lips and throat were dry.

“Listen, Mary; I am sorry you had to

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entertain at this dinner alone. I regret it very much. I told you that over the 'phone. I would have come if I could, but I could not. Now, I think you had better let the matter rest there."

"Where were you?"

He did not answer.

"Where were you? You must tell me *where you were to-night!*"

Still no answer.

"Do you mean that you won't answer me—that you won't even tell me where you have been?" I was frightened. I knew I should stop—that I was going too far—that I would only suffer more for this. But I knew, too, that I could not stop now—I knew I would go on and on. . . .

"Then you refuse to tell me where you have been?"

"I must refuse, Mary, to be catechized in this way. Will you let me say good-night now?" He came toward the door

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as though to close it. That movement broke the last of my self-control.

“Then I will tell you where you have been. You *were with another woman—the woman for whom you have neglected me for over a year!* And you thought I didn’t know—didn’t *know* you were in the toils of some woman—a bad, shameless woman—a common——”

“Mary!” He took a step toward me, his hands clenched, his face ghastly pale.

“Oh, I know you could kill me for saying that. I only wish you would! Don’t you think I would welcome death instead of this life I’ve been living for months? But it shall not go on. You will promise me now that you will never see her again, or I will end it all to-night! Will you promise me that—will you? •Will you promise never to see that . . .”

There was something in his face—something that . . .

“Then go to her—live with her—marry,



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her if you will! I will never trouble you again!"

A great red wave seemed before my eyes as I rushed down the hall into the bath-room and locked the door. The bottles—the bottles on the medicine-shelf! Glycerine, toilet-water, bay rum—in a frenzied glance my eyes swept the labels. Was there nothing—nothing that would give oblivion—that would end it all forever?"

The door was being fiercely shaken. "Open this door, Mary!" his voice came hoarsely from the outside. "Open it, or I will break it down!"

I must find *something* quick—quick—before he wrenched the door from its hinges. I knocked some bottles from the shelf as I frantically thrust them aside to get to those behind. Camphor, witch-hazel, glycerine—oh, was there nothing—nothing? Then back of them all shone the label "Laudanum—Poison!"

And then—my trembling fingers *broke*

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*the cork.* Half of it remained tight in the neck of the bottle. He was throwing his whole weight upon the door now—in a moment it would come down. I tore the scarf-pin from my dress—it bent in the cork. Then I caught up a tooth-brush and thrust the handle against the cork—it yielded. Another thrust pushed it down in the bottle!

I raised it to my lips. . . . A deafening crash. Glass fell shattering all around me. I stood paralyzed. Through the empty door-frame, from which he had shivered the heavy ground-glass, Horace's white face and dark, gleaming eyes were fixed upon me. Another second and he had reached through a bloodstained hand, unlocked the door, threw it open, jerked the bottle from me and hurled it to the floor. I heard it break and smelled the pungent odor of laudanum.

Then he half led, half carried me to the couch in my room. The blood from

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his cut hand had dripped down the front of my dress, and there was a large red stain on the lace of my sleeve. I gazed at it dully. At the moment I think I was incapable of any feeling. I heard him go back into the bath-room. He returned with a towel wrapped around his hand. Neither of us had spoken. I was trembling, quivering all over. Not crying—I could not cry. He sat down beside the couch and laid his hand on my shoulder, as though to quiet me.

I closed my eyes, and slowly there stole over me a strange sense of quiet—of peace, like the calm of some strong narcotic. I know now the sensation Helen Chandler spoke of—the exhaustion that sometimes comes after a fierce passion has wrecked itself.

I don't know how long he stayed beside me, or how long it was before I slept. When I awoke it was dawn. A blanket had been laid over me, and I was alone.

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From under his door shone a strip of bright light—he was still awake.

*No reference to that night has been made between us since.* Only a bandaged hand and a bloodstained dress (carefully hid away) bear testimony to that night.

The next morning I forced myself to go down to breakfast. He was very pale, and his hand was thickly bandaged; but he said "Good-morning" quietly, as though nothing had happened. During the day a glazier called to fix the bathroom door; evidently he had telephoned for one from his office. He made no mention of it to me. That night, when he came home to dinner, I saw that his hand had been dressed and skilfully bandaged. He had been to a surgeon, then. Was the cut deep? Could it be anything serious? But I dared not ask him. I can see that he has it bandaged fresh every day. Does it pain him? My heart aches with pity and anxiety; but I can say nothing.

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November 3d

"The relations of men and women can never remain stationary. They must either go forward or backward; there is no resting place, no height that can be permanently held."

Is that true, or was it written, as such things usually are, only for literary effect?

His love for her—has it yet reached the heights, that it must soon recede?

To what self-abnegation have I been subdued that I could write that last sentence—to imply that I was willing to wait for his love of her to wane that he might come back to me!

November 4th

I remember long ago saying to Horace that I had no special talent. Art, music, literature, languages—I had a superficial aptitude for them all, but a real talent for none.

And he answered tenderly: "Sweet-

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heart, you have the greatest of all talents—a wonderful talent for loving.”

“A talent for loving!” Yes, I have had that, and the saddest part of all is that I have it still. “A talent for loving!” And I am a faded wife of forty-five, whose husband loves another woman. “A talent for loving!” Horace, it is breaking my heart. Why did it not die within me when it ceased to give you pleasure?

“A talent for loving!” Oh, it did make you happy once, Horace. Have you forgotten how often you held me in your arms, murmuring that no other woman in the world could love so dearly, so tenderly, that no one else could have such quaint little ways of loving? Have you forgotten the “whispering kisses”—touching, oh, so softly your hair and eyes with my lips, or laying my head on your shoulder and just sweeping your neck with my eyelashes—a little purring caress all my own? And oh, so many tender, intimate love-

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ways—have you forgotten them, Horace? Have you forgotten them all?

And when you came home tired, fretted, and with a cruel headache, I would kneel by the couch beside you, with my lips pressed against your forehead, until my very love would draw away the pain. And you would fall asleep, often with your arm clasped close around me, and however cramped or numb I might become, I would still kneel there, not moving for fear of waking you.

Will any other woman love you like that, Horace? Will any other woman give you so much? Oh, I am crying so I cannot see to write.

November 5th

If our child had lived! To have had it with us every day, to know that life was there because we had loved! My child and his—a constant living reminder of all that our love had meant, knowing that out of it had grown all the immortality

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that life can give. Could any one have ever come between us then?

November 6th

I have been reading back through this journal. Last April the twenty-seventh I wrote this:

*"Once he knows that I know, I would have to leave him. If there is in me any vestige of womanly pride, I could not continue to live with him and tacitly consent to be daily dishonored."*

*And yet that is what I am doing now! I am still living with him, though now he knows that I know. And I have not the strength to go away!*

November 7th

I have become so nervous and unstrung lately that I dread even to go out on the streets alone. To-day I was almost half an hour trying to cross a crowded corner. Cars, cabs, trucks, recklessly driven automobiles, and a crashing, deafening elevated overhead—it all seemed to terrify



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me. I stood on the curb *afraid* to cross. Several times I started and then ran back as an automobile swept down upon me. At last a policeman came and walked over beside me. When I reached home I was weak from strained, quivering nerves. And a year ago I could dart fearlessly across the most crowded street! I know that this strange, unreasoning fear I now have for the most trivial things is growing upon me. When Horace came home I wanted to cry out to him to stay with me, to put his arms about me, to keep away this haunting fear. I believe if I could only tell him—if he *knew*—he would try to help me—he would not let this grow upon me.

November 8th

This morning I awoke with such a weight of despondency, of hopelessness, that I felt I could not meet another day. The mere thought of bathing, of dressing, of going through the necessary routine of

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the day, bore upon me as something too difficult of accomplishment.

The cold air from an open window was blowing on me, but to cross the room and put down the window seemed an effort that would take more initiative, more strength, more courage, than I had to give.

Did any one ever turn their face to the wall and say: "I am through. The burden of life is too heavy—I will never take it up again," and then lie there until death released them? And would the release come soon? This morning I felt if only I could lie there, that to me it would come very soon, for my body seemed too weak, too weary, to hold life within it much longer.

November 9th

I spend hours lately planning meetings with *her*. Night after night I lie awake, picturing what such an encounter would be like. Sometimes I think of meeting her on the street with him. What would

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he do? Would he merely bow to me and pass on, or would he stop and speak? Would he introduce her—and how?

Never in all these years have I seen my husband with another woman. Could I pass on proudly serene, or would I break down in some emotional way?

Again and again I picture scenes—ghastly scenes—in which I go to her apartment, and there confront them both. I have pictured him, white and stern, stepping to her side and saying: “Why have you come here? This is the woman I love—I shall never leave her.”

Again, I have pictured him starting to come toward me, when he saw me at the door. And then she would come between us, throwing herself in his arms—keeping him from me.

The scenes are always different, but the apartment I see is always the same—a luxuriously furnished room with shaded lights and burning gas-logs. I always picture her there in a soft white house-

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gown, with Horace sitting near, reading aloud or bending over her, talking tenderly, earnestly.

Is her apartment anything like I picture it? The whole atmosphere of the room and many of its details seem so distinct.

How strange such imaginings are!

And why do I always think of her as frail and delicate? Is it because I feel that is how her appeal to Horace would be strongest? Will I ever meet her? And will it be in any of these ways?

I know that with all my heart I hope such a meeting will never occur; it would only increase my suffering and degradation a hundred-fold. And yet I am always planning, always picturing, always living it.

Why must I torture myself so? Why cannot I keep my mind from such things?

## CHAPTER IX

November 10th

**THERE** is something so sad about the doing of anything for the last time. To-day I was packing away Horace's summer clothes, as I have every fall for fifteen years, and my heart was sick with fear that it was for the last time—that I would never do that again.

Oh, if I could only be told that it was *not* for the last time! If fate would let me look into the future and I could see myself once more putting away those summer things! If only I could be sure that next fall—a year from now—it would still be *I* who would again fold them away!

November 11th

To-day this letter came from Edith Carrington:

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I have said I was spending this week with you. If Frank telephones from Boston, say that I have just gone out—make any excuse, but make him *believe* that I am with you.

Whatever you may think—whatever your disapproval may be—you will help me in this now. Life owes me these four days of happiness—after that I shall have only memories. The future will hold nothing else.

For myself I would scorn this subterfuge—but I cannot wholly forget my children. Hold any letters that may come in your care. I will come to New York Saturday for a few hours.

What does it mean? “Four days—after that I shall have only memories.” Has she gone away with the man she loves for these four days, that they may have this one glimpse of happiness? And then to separate—to send him from her forever?

Four days alone with the man she loves! Of the moral right or wrong I cannot think just now—I can only think of what those four days will mean, even with the anguish of parting over them.

A year ago I would have recoiled from

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lending even passive aid to such a thing, but now I have come to know more of life, its bitterness, its heart-hunger.

If Edith Carrington has the courage to wrest from fate these four days and pay for them afterward, as in some way she must pay, can I presume to say: "It must not be—it is wrong"?

I know that I would barter my own soul could it bring me four such days with Horace! There is no price I would not pay to have again even for that short time the same love and tenderness and intimacy that we once had.

And Edith Carrington *never* had it. From the beginning her marriage was a ghastly thing. How then can I judge her for fiercely asserting her right to these four days?

November 13th

This morning's mail brought a letter addressed to Edith. It was postmarked Boston, and was in Frank Carrington's

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writing. There have been no telephone inquiries, and I have had no further word from her.

I am thinking of her constantly, and always with that feeling that I should have been able to have helped her more—that I might even have saved her from this.

The more I dwell on it all, the more I fear for her. "The memories of these four days"—will they comfort her in the future as she thinks, or will her future be more unbearable because of them?

November 15th

This afternoon a cab stopped at our door and Edith Carrington stepped out. She was in a gray tailored suit, was heavily veiled. The cabman followed with two large traveling-bags.

When I brought her up to my room, I was frightened. She looked so ill. She was very pale, her hands were like ice, and she was trembling violently.



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"I want to stay until to-morrow. I can't bear to go home to-night," was all she said.

I brought a warm tea-gown, made her undress and lie down.

"It is over," she said dully. "He sailed at noon." And then she turned her face to the wall. I felt she would rather be alone, so I left her then. Later when I came in she was still staring at the wall with eyes dark with suffering.

When Horace came, I told him Edith was here, but that she had a sick headache and would not be down for dinner. He expressed his sympathy, and said he hoped she would stay several days. I can see that he is always glad now to have some one visiting me; it makes him feel more free to leave me—to spend the evenings with *her*!

I took up a small tray to Edith, but she could not eat. She asked me to sit in the room with her—to read or sew—that she did not want to be alone. I was glad to

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know I could be of some little comfort; I have felt so helpless to help her through it all.

It was not until I was leaving her for the night that she called me back.

"Mary, there is one thing I want to tell you, and then I don't think I can ever speak of this again. You think I sent him away because I had come to feel our love was wrong, and because of the children. That is not true—and I want you to know the *truth*.

"I have given him up because I knew I could not hold him. I ended it while it was still in my power to end it. I don't mean that he would have left me; his sense of duty and obligation would have held him, but I did not want that. If I had told him that was my reason for parting, he would have persuaded me that I was mistaken. So I lied to him. I said it was because of the children.

"So we took these four days alone for farewell. And oh, it was wonderful!" She

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held out her arms with a stifled sob. "However black and desolate may be the future, I will have the memory of those four days.

"We have never been really alone before. There had been only stolen hours, clouded by constant deceptions and precautions that we both hated, that always filled us with a sense of degradation.

"But these four days we were free from all that. He took me to a quaint old country inn, sixty miles from Boston. And"—tensely—"it has made him love me more—infinately more. The very fact of his losing me—that I was drawing away—made him want me more. That"—bitterly—"is the nature of man—to value a thing more when he is losing it.

"Oh, I knew all that—I counted on that when I planned it. I knew that had I the courage to end it this way, he would leave me with his heart full of longing, of desire.

"The last thing he said was: 'A word \_

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will bring me back to you.' But I shall never send that word. I have ended it now at its best. I shall never see it die the death that such things always do."

November 16th

Edith Carrington has gone back to Boston. Will she have the courage of her resolution? Can she live on the memory of those four days, or later will she weaken and send for him? Once more I am filled with a sense of my powerlessness. I cannot help her—I can only wait.

November 17th

How few books appeal to me now! Beside the real tragedies that in this past year have come into my life, the carefully wrought plots of fiction seem so artificial, so meaningless.

Life is so much more complex, so much more involved than any sectional portrayal of it can be. In fiction it is always some definite solution for some definite prob-

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lem, in which all the threads of causation are brought to bear on some culminating crisis.

Life—real life—is so unlike this. Its problems are so intricate, so baffling, and for most of them there are no solutions. The threads of causation are hopelessly entangled in a labyrinth of events that solve nothing, prove nothing, unless it be the thwarting, inexorable chaos of it all.

November 18th

I am almost happy to-day. It is because when I asked Horace this morning about the furnace, about having it thoroughly gone over before cold weather, he spoke of a new furnace. Said this one was nearly worn out, that "we will have to have a new one next winter, and we might as well put it in now."

"We will have to have a new one next winter . . ." That phrase has been singing in my heart all day. It has been so long since he has made any reference to

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the future, and now this has given me a little of the old feeling of security and permanency in our home.

November 19th

For years we have gone to my brother's for Thanksgiving dinner, and they have always spent New Year's with us. This morning I received a letter from Katherine, my brother's wife, with the annual invitation. I read the letter to Horace at the breakfast table.

"Do you really care to go this year?"

"Why, it wouldn't seem like Thanksgiving anywhere else, would it?" I asked, struggling against the sick wave that always comes over me now at each breaking away of our old customs and our old life.

"Well, I had thought we might have dinner at home this year. If we could have it early, about six o'clock, it would give me an opportunity to accept an engagement for later in the evening, partial-

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ly a business matter with an out-of-town client."

And then, as he saw the color leave my face:

"Of course we will go"—hastily. "I didn't know you cared so much about it."

November 20th

I have written Katherine that we cannot come this year. He was willing to go, almost insisted upon going when he saw how it affected me. But I have no heart for it now. He wants to spend the evening with *her*. It would be only pity that kept him with me, and I do not want that.

One by one all the ties and customs of our life together are being broken. The end cannot be far off. Will I have the strength to meet it? Now and then my crushed pride cries out that I will never try to hold him through pity. And yet deep in my heart I am afraid, *afraid* that should it come to his leaving me alto-

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gether, I would try to hold him in any way I could, through pity, through my legal right—desperately I would use any claim, any means, just to *hold him*.

November 21st

In one of the December magazines there is an article compiled from the opinions of a dozen prominent people as to what Christmas gift they would give the world, if it lay in their power to bestow some one thing.

One writes he would give to every child an equal education; another that her gift would be universal temperance; another would confer a wider religious instinct; and still another the equal chance for work.

And I—were the power of the one world-gift granted me—I would satisfy the *need for love in the breast of every heart-hungry woman!*

November 22d

It snowed heavily during the night, the first deep snow of the season. I was



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awakened early this morning by the sound of scraping shovels. When I drew up the blinds, the scene was like a great Christmas card. The trees are beautiful, each branch bending patiently under its burden of snow. The street, except for a few tracks in the center, is yet unbroken. A few hours' traffic and all that purity and whiteness will be trampled and soiled.

It is a dry, clinging snow and has filled the window-sills and is packed up several inches against the glass. I raised one of the windows and took up a great handful. There is always something exhilarating to me about the smell of snow—that crisp, illusive odor that is indescribable. Even though it is very cold, for a long time I stood at the open window breathing in the fresh keen air. How wonderful the country would be to-day. If Horace would only take me for a long sleigh-ride, as he used to do!

I am a little happier this morning—just because of this snow.

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November 23d

I have been reading one of John Oliver Hobbs' novels, in which she says:

"It is a mistake to think our prayers are not answered—they are. We get our heart's desire when we have ceased to care for it."

My heart's desire—Horace's love—will I ever cease to want that? Everything I read now which bears on life, love, happiness or unhappiness, I seem to apply in some way to Horace and myself—to the condition of our lives now. I cannot help it; my thoughts always come back to that.

November 24th

Thanksgiving Day, and, oh, such a pitiable one! The long course-dinner is over. We had it all alone. Neither of us could eat. I could not swallow past the lump in my throat, and he seemed worried and absent-minded, as he almost always is now. After dinner he made some vague excuse

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about an out-of-town client and hurried off.

I can see how he hates to lie. All his life he has despised an untruth more than anything else, and now—now—— Oh, what power has this woman to change his whole nature—to force him into constant subterfuge and deception?

## CHAPTER X

——— HOTEL, BROOKLYN, November 29th

A CHEERLESS hotel room, a bed, a table, a stationary washstand, three chairs, a telephone on the wall and a card of hotel laws and regulations on the back of the door. My silver brushes on the bureau, and my suit-case on a chair—how strangely unfamiliar they look! For two days they have been there—and yet . . . I cannot put it into words—I only know that, often in these two days I have spread a towel over the bureau and have hid the suit-case in the wardrobe. And then there is nothing in sight that recalls . . . Nothing except the telephone. That is just the same—even the same green book hangs beneath it. By taking down that receiver and whispering a number—at any

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moment—I could . . . But no! no! I shall go mad if I think of that. For two days I have been fighting that thought.

Why did I bring with me this journal? If I must write—if the only relief I know is putting my suffering into words—would it not have been better to have begun anew? Why did I put in my suitcase this record of the life I was leaving? The very cover of the book, even the *feel* of the soft leather, brings back my desk before me—the gilt inkstand, the blotting-pad, the silver paper-knife, the tiny revolving calendar, the address-book—are they still lying carelessly as I left them, or have they been locked away? I can almost hear the ticking of my small French desk-clock. Will I ever see it again? Will I ever take it from its case and wind it, as I have so many hundred times? I am praying that I will—*that I will!* Only two days and—oh, God! how I *want to go back!*

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November 30th

That night—the events that at last drove me from my home! For two days and nights I have walked up and down this room, living it over and over, always with the anguished questioning—could I have stayed? Was there any way I could have kept any vestige of my self-respect and still have stayed?

Why did I go to the door—why did I listen? Never before have I stooped to so contemptible a thing. Why did I do it then?

We were at dinner when the telephone rang. Horace dropped his napkin and hurried up to the library. There was something so tense, so anxious in his manner, and he had been so silent and pre-occupied all through the dinner.

Was he expecting this message? Was it from *her*? I arose from the table and went half way up the stairs until I could see the library door. It was closed. There was something in the sight of that closed

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door that sent the fierce hot blood surging through me. Was he talking to this woman in our house—closing the door on me and talking to *her*? Deliberately I walked to the door and *listened*. I would know—I had a *right* to know.

“Temperature 102? Is the doctor there now? Why did you not send for me before? Yes, at once. Tell her I am coming at once.”

I made no attempt to slip away. I was leaning against the door when he opened it. For a second he stood motionless, then:

“You have listened?”

“Yes.”

“I am sorry you did that,” he said quietly, as he passed me on his way upstairs.

I caught his arm. “If I have listened, it is you who have driven me to it.”

He made no answer; he merely released his arm and went on upstairs. In a few moments he came down with his hat and

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coat. I was still waiting where he had left me in the hall. Again I caught his arm.

"You are not going to that woman to-night!"

"Mary, I am sorry you are doing this; it is only humiliating to us both."

Even in the dim light of the hall I could see he was very pale.

"You are not going to that woman to-night!"

He passed on down the hall to the front door. I ran ahead of him and stood before the door, my hand on the lock.

*"Horace, if you go to that woman to-night I shall not be here when you come back!"*

"You must do as you think best." He put me gently aside, opened the door and closed it after him.

December 1st

If I could know just what I wrote—if I could remember the exact words! But I was almost crazed that night. I only



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know that I left a note—a bitter, passionate note—saying that I was going away and would never come back until he promised unconditionally that he would never see that woman again. I did not wish him to know or try to find out where I was, but that any letter addressed to Mrs. R. L. Kempton, General Delivery, I would receive. But not to write unless it was to make the promise I demanded. I think that was all I said, but I do not know how I said it.

Oh, why did I say he must not write unless he made that promise? If I had not said that he might have written something—anything—that would have made it possible for me to go back. I know now I would go back under any pretext. Those five days have beaten me down—down. . . . If he would only write and make the promise—even though he broke it the next day. If I can only go back, I will be blind—blind! I will make no complaints, no reproaches. I will ask so lit-

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tle—so much less than I have ever asked before. I will accept any conditions if only I can be with him.

December 2d

For the sixth time in these four days I have gone over to New York to the city post-office, to the window marked "General Delivery," and have asked if there is anything for Mrs. R. L. Kempton, and always the man answers "Nothing!"

And now I am back in Brooklyn, in my hotel room, waiting, waiting for what? For the morning, when I will again go over to that post-office and again be told "Nothing!" What have I done? If he should never answer that letter—if he should never try to find me!

For the first two days my fierce pride and bitterness kept me up. But now—now I am *terrified* at what I have done. I *could* have stayed—I could have seen him every day—every morning I could have been with him at breakfast, and many times at dinner. I could have had all his

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things about me, his room to straighten, his clothes to touch—to bury my face against! But now I have nothing—nothing. . . . How long can I *live* like this?

December 3d

The silent telephone—this telephone in my room. In all these six days not once has it rung. Why should it? Who is there to call up Mrs. R. L. Kempton, in an obscure Brooklyn hotel?

And yet the longing that it will ring is never quite out of my mind, the hope that in some way he has found out where I am and has come to take me home. Day and night I dream of his coming, live through scene after scene in which he comes for me. I always think of a sudden telephone ring, and the girl downstairs saying: "A gentleman is here to see you," or perhaps he will give his name, "Mr. Kennedy," or he may take the name I am under so there will be no question of his being my husband—of his coming to my

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room. And then I will say: "You may ask the gentleman to come up." Sometimes I find myself saying it out loud. Then I picture him at the door, dream of his taking me in his arms, whispering: "Mary, my dear little wife, it is all a mistake. There is no other woman in my life but you—there never will be. I have come to take you home, dear, never to let you go again." Hour after hour, walking up and down this bare hotel room, I rehearse—live through scenes like that.

And yet I am so sure, so piteously sure, that nothing like these dreams will ever happen. That the most I have to hope for is some pretext to go back—to go back to indifference and neglect—just to go back.

December 4th

I happened to open the drawer of the table in this room to-day. It is a cheap, shiny oak table, and the drawer, stuck by the varnish, opened reluctantly. Perhaps that is why the careless maid had not

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troubled to clear it out. It seemed to hold relics of several tenants. A couple of rusty pens, a wire hairpin, some matches, an empty cigarette box, the seven of spades from a pack of cards, some laundry-slips, and several sheets of hotel paper. Most of the paper was blotted, one sheet was covered with penciled figures, another had "August 16th" written on the date line, on another some one had jotted down a telephone number—6205 Rector. In the back of the drawer was a folded sheet torn in two. By fitting it together, it read:

DEAR MINNIE—Things look pretty hopeless. I saw Mack to-day, but it was just as I thought—nothing doing. He is pretty much of a bluff. I am to see Brandford to-morrow. Yesterday was Sunday and I tell you I felt mighty blue. I thought I would get a letter from you this morning; haven't had one since Friday. I wish I had some good news to write. But keep up spirits, little girl, things may come right yet; they ought to for your sake. You've had a tough time, I know. If I can——

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And that was all. Why was it left unfinished? Had he written another and more cheerful note? I imagined him a man of mediocre ability, on here trying to get a position, writing back to his wife. She may have had a hard time, but he *loved* her. The "little girl" and the rest of the sentence shows that. I wonder if she realizes how little anything else matters as long as she has love? How gladly I would go through any poverty and hardships if I could only feel that Horace loved me.

As I tried to close the drawer, I saw a small newspaper clipping, which had been caught in the crevice at the side.

ST. LOUIS, June 12.—Alfred E. Baker, a traveling salesman for a New York woolen house, committed suicide in the Hotel Vendome here last night. He was found unconscious, a pistol still in his hand, and two bullet wounds in his side. He died on the way to the hospital. Several letters were found showing his despondency from ill health and family troubles.

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Why was this clipping here? Had some one been in this room to whom the death of Alfred E. Baker brought sorrow or remorse? I closed the drawer with a shudder. The room seemed full of ghosts—ghosts of past tenants. A small, cheap room in a medium-priced hotel—what a procession of humanity must have passed through here. What could these walls tell of discouragement and despair—what scenes have they looked down upon?

Oh, Horace! Horace! I am filled with terror! Come after me; take me away from here; take me home and shield and protect me. Keep this strange fear of life—of I know not what—away from me. Oh, Horace, I am afraid—*afraid!* . . .

December 5th

As I was returning to-day from another futile trip to the post-office, too wretched and heartsick to care where I went, I walked aimlessly for several blocks. Turning a corner I came upon a great crowd

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around an elevated station. The stairs and platform above were black with people. The whole atmosphere of the street was tense with excitement. "What has happened?" a voice near me asked. "A woman threw herself before the elevated," some one answered. "They are trying to get her body from under the train."

I turned and ran from the scene. The crushed body of a woman under those cars! What had she suffered to goad her to that? Why had she chosen so ghastly a way? Was it the cruelty of some man she loved? Oh, God! the suffering of women! If you are all-powerful, why do you let the creatures you create be crazed by the anguish of loving—an instinct you plant within them, and they are powerless to combat?

December 6th

My telephone has just rung, the first time in all these days. I was sitting by the window, gazing miserably down at the street below, when suddenly it rang out,



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startlingly shrill and clear. I stumbled toward it, my heart leaping in my throat. Was it Horace? Had he found me? . . .

"Hello!" I called tremblingly.

For a moment there was no answer.

"Hello! Who is it? Hello!" I cried again excitedly.

And then in an operator's strident voice: "The hot water is going to be turned off for a couple of hours; they are fixing the boilers."

I threw up the receiver and burst into tears, bitter, hysterical tears. It seems as though fate, not content with my suffering, is playing grimly, fiendishly with my emotions.

December 7th

Again I have been to the post-office, and again there was "nothing." Perhaps it was my white face and the thought of my daily calls that aroused the man's pity, for he said it almost reluctantly: "Nothing this morning."

Oh, Horace—Horace—don't you *care*

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what has become of me? How do you know that I have not thrown myself into the river or before some rushing train? How do you know I was not the woman who was yesterday crushed under the elevated? The papers this morning say: "An unknown woman of middle age, with clothes of good quality, but nothing by which to identify her." That might be I. How do you know it was not? Don't you *care?*

December 8th

I have heard his voice—*his voice!* Again and again during the long hours of these days I have stood by the telephone in this room, not daring to touch the receiver, but whispering "Horace—Horace!" into the closed instrument, knowing that on his desk by his arm was a wire connecting this with him, and hoping in some vague way that he might feel some of the love and longing I was pouring into it. Again and again as I walk ceaselessly up and down this room, I have

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stopped to touch the cold instrument with my lips and cheek lovingly, beseechingly, as though to bribe it to give me some message from him. But it never has; it hangs there cold and silent.

To-day I *touched* the receiver, then my hand closed around it. *I took it down.* I did not know what I was going to do—all these days I had been fighting against what I now did in a sweeping, uncontrolled moment. “2849 Cortlandt!” I whispered. With one hand I held the receiver, with the other I supported myself against the wall or I would have fallen. It was four o’clock; would he still be at his office?

Almost instantly came his secretary’s voice: “Hello!”

“Is—Mr. Kennedy—there?” I did not need to disguise my voice, so hoarse and strained it was; no one would ever have known it for mine.

“Who wishes to speak to him?”

I did not answer.

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"Who is this, please?"

And then, as I still remained silent:  
"What name shall I give?"—impatiently.

"I must speak to—Mr. Kennedy—myself," I answered, hardly above a whisper.  
Then quite distinctly I heard her say:  
"Mr. Kennedy, some one on the wire wishes to speak to you; they will not give their name."

Another moment and I heard his voice—rich and full—the voice of my husband!

"Hello! hello! Who is this?"

I covered my mouth with my hand to keep from crying aloud, but my whole nature strained out to him in dumb appeal. Would he not *feel* who it was? Would not the tensity of the silence carry to him the thought . . .

Again his voice: "Hello! This is Mr. Kennedy. Do you wish to speak to me?"

Oh, the mute, straining prayer I sent over that wire! Would he not *know*? Would he not say: "Mary! Mary! is it you?"

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Once more he called "Hello!" Another throbbing silence, and then that faint click in the 'phone; he had hung up the receiver! He had not known—he had not known! I fell to the floor beneath the telephone.

December 9th

The atmosphere of this room seems so charged with my suffering, with the hours I have spent here walking up and down or gazing hopelessly out the window, that this afternoon I felt it was crushing, stifling me—that I must get away from it, if only for a little while. I locked my door and walked down the hall, the dingy, red-carpeted hall. I did not take the elevator, but went down the stairs to the reception-room on the first floor. It is a dreary, inhospitable place, with its stiff, upholstered furniture and faded satin hangings.

I went over to a seat in an obscure corner. People were passing in and out, but no one noticed me, no one even glanced toward me. A woman was writing

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souvenir postals at a desk near by. She was a pleasant-faced, middle-aged woman, in a gray traveling suit; her coat and muff lay on a chair beside her. In a few moments a large, comfortable-looking man with a coat on his arm and carrying a grip appeared at the door.

"Ready, Martha?"

The woman smiled up at him. "In just a moment; I have only two more."

"Take your time. We've half an hour to spare." He sat down beside her and waited patiently. He looked like a prosperous citizen of some small town, who had brought his wife here buying or sight-seeing, and they were now on their way back home.

The woman gathered up her postals. "Do you know, I forgot that box of drawing-pencils for Fred. Do you suppose we could get them on the way to the depot?"

"Why, I guess we can," he answered comfortingly. "Some of the smaller stores

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may be open." He helped her on with her coat, and they went off together.

Just a plain, commonplace middle-aged couple; but they were *together*! And to me they seemed to radiate peace, contentment and *home*! I could almost see their comfortable home, with Fred and the other children waiting their return.

Does that woman know how happy she is? She is not *alone*—she is with the man that loves her—not romantically (it may have been years since he has spoken a word of love), but still he loves her. I knew that by the way he said "Martha," by the way he put on her coat. She will never be alone as long as he lives.

Why was that woman given peace and security in her husband's love, while I am here alone—alone—*always alone*? I find myself walking up and down this room, crying out to the walls that if I must suffer, let it be in some other way, but not this awful loneliness; anything but this—it is

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*creeping through me with cold, petrifying fear.*

### *Midnight*

“The days when you *were not*—did they trouble you? The days when you *are not* shall trouble you only as much.”

That phrase has been with me all day. Oblivion—oblivion—would it mean only that? Cessation from suffering—obliteration of all things? The woman who threw herself under that elevated—has she that now? Has she found the peace, the rest, the *oblivion* she sought, or is there no escape—must she still work out her destiny?

December 10th

Two letters! *Two letters!* One dated yesterday and one *five days ago!* By some mistake it had been mislaid in the general delivery. This morning, instead of the usual “Nothing,” the man handed me two envelopes. My heart stood still as I saw him take them from the box and come to—



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ward the window. I did not wait to hear his explanation as to why one had been delayed—I caught them up and almost ran out of the building and across the crowded street.

The buildings, the traffic, the people, the sunshine, the whole world, seemed transformed. I could have cried aloud with joy—hysterical joy. And then I found myself saying: “If I can wait—if I can keep from opening them until I reach my room, they will contain all that I want; but if I read them now, they may be cold and bitter.” As a child I used often to make some such bargain with fate, bribing her, as it were, by some great self-control, some sacrifice, to give me what I longed for. It has been years since I had such a thought, but now I clung to it with superstitious belief. I would *force* myself to wait until I reached my room.

All the way to Brooklyn I held the letters before me, turning them over and

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over, examining the postmarks, trying to wrest something of their contents from the way they were addressed. "Mrs. R. L. Kempton"—how strange that name looked in his writing! There was a blot on the last envelope—did that mean anything? And the stamp was not carefully placed—could that mean he was anxious and worried? He had not written at any length; each of the envelopes held but one sheet of paper. What did that imply?

When at last I reached my hotel room, my trembling fingers could hardly unlock the door. What would the next few moments bring? I tore open the first envelope and drew out the letter. Then I turned my face away. It meant so much—my whole future depended on that note—I was afraid—*afraid* to read it!

I threw myself on my knees by the bed and murmured an incoherent little prayer. I had suffered so much, would God let this letter help me, and not let it make me suffer more?

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And then I read these two letters—I pin them in here:

December 5th

DEAR MARY—You have asked me not to try to find you, and I am respecting that wish. But you must write me at once where you are and let me come for you. I know you have not been well for some time. I am arranging my business so when you return we can go away for a little rest and change. I am sure it will help you. I shall look for a message to-morrow.

As ever,

HORACE.

December 9th

DEAR MARY—I have been waiting anxiously for some word. If I do not hear from you by the end of the week, I shall no longer feel bound by your request, and shall make every effort to find you. You must know I cannot let you remain away like this.

As ever,

HORACE.

*Later*

The notes are cold and colorless. They ignore entirely the promise which I made

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the condition of my return, and I know now that I, too, must ignore it.

So many conflicting emotions have possessed me, since I tore open these notes a few hours ago. At first I was conscious only of joy—joy that they gave me, at least, a pretext to go back; and I wrote a long, emotional letter, in which I poured out my love and longing to see him, and something of what I had suffered here. But when I compared it with his brief, dispassionate notes, I saw how impossible it would be to send. Then I wrote another, and still another, each more subdued, less emotional, than the last, but still I tore them up.

And then came the desire to make him say *more*, either by remaining silent, or writing without giving my address to increase his anxiety, perhaps even his love, for we sometimes grow to love again the thing we are about to lose. And so I wrote, saying briefly that I could not return to the conditions I had left, and there

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had been nothing in his notes to assure me that they would be different.

But I could not send this; I had not the courage. It would mean more days of anguished uncertainty, and I have suffered too horribly here; I am afraid—*afraid* to stay. Let the conditions be what they may, *I must go back*. So, after spending two hours in writing and re-writing letters, only to tear them up, I ended by sending this one-line note on hotel paper:

“I am here at this place, under the name of Mrs. R. L. Kempton.”

## CHAPTER XI

December 12th

HOME—home! Oh, the dearness, the precious familiarity of it all! I have *kissed* every piece of furniture in my room, even the wallpaper and the curtains. I feel as though I wanted to caress everything in the house. This morning, after Horace had gone to the office, I went all over the house, simply *touching* things, greeting them, as it were, after my absence.

My dear little French clock sat on my desk, silent and sad. As I took it from its leather case, I thought of my heart-sick fear that I would never wind it again. How cheerfully it started ticking! I am sure clocks must be unhappy when they are silent; they must feel there is nothing more useless than a silent clock.

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Oh, how good it is to feel that my place is here, that I have been needed and missed! Ellen is beaming; she cannot do enough for me. It seems that Horace told her I had been called away to a sick relative. (But I believe she knows more than that. She is very loyal, though, and devoted to me; I have no fear that she will gossip.) Persia has been following me all morning, rubbing against my dress and purring exuberantly, not leaving me for a moment, as though she was afraid I might go away again.

And yet how trivial are all these details! The one great thing, the thing that makes my heart leap with joy, is that Horace is *glad to have me back*. He is not demonstrative, as he would have been several years ago, but in a quiet, subdued way he is *glad*. Oh, I know that—I can tell!

I feel so safe, so secure, now that I am in my home. Already the memory of that room in Brooklyn seems infinitely far

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away. I cannot realize that this time yesterday I was there; it seems like months, or even years ago, or even more like some hideous dream.

Oh, I am so *happy* just now! It has been so long since I have been happy, that I want to *hold* to these moments, hold to them desperately, to keep them from slipping away.

December 15th

I found "Amiel's Journal" on the library-table, where Horace had been reading last night. As I was replacing the book on the shelves, it fell open at a pencil-marked passage. I do not read French well, but this was not difficult to translate:

"Destiny has two ways of crushing us—by denying our wishes and by fulfilling them."

Why had he marked that? It is strangely like that epigram of John Oliver Hobbs. Of what was Horace thinking when he read it? Was it something about *her*, or of me? Does he, too, make a per-



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sonal application of everything, as I do now?

December 16th

The happiness and sense of security I felt when I first came home is gradually slipping from me, and all the old torturing thoughts of *her* are coming back. Horace tries to be kind, but I can see that he is even more worried and abstracted than ever before.

SUNDAY, December 17th

I have heard her voice. For one throbbing moment I spoke to her over the telephone. This time by remaining silent myself I forced her to speak. I do not know what I feel. Great waves of emotion have been sweeping over me ever since. It was near eleven when the telephone rang. I did not go down at once, for I thought he was there; he always spends Sunday morning in the library, and I knew he had been there only a few moments before. But when the bell rang shrilly again and again,

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I hurried down. If it should be . . . I was trembling violently. Quickly it flashed over me that if *I* remained silent *she* would be forced to speak!

I took down the receiver and waited. For several seconds there was no sound, and then a faint, soft voice called: "Hello!" Still I did not speak. And then the same voice: "Hello! hello, Central! I asked for 4629 River!"

"Well, there they are—go on!" rasped Central.

Then I called clearly: "Hello! this is 4629 River." I waited tensely. She *must* speak, now; it would be less suspicious than for her to remain silent.

"Is—is Mr. Kennedy there?" I seemed to feel every throb of hesitation and fear in that tremulous voice.

"Mr. Kennedy is not here just now. Is there any message?" I managed to say, but my voice was strained and hard.

"No, thank you; it is not important. Good-by!"

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For a long time after I hung up the receiver I stood there motionless. I seemed unable to move. She had *known* who I was! I felt that in her voice. Did she know *I knew*, too?

When Horace came in about an hour later, I did not say that some one had telephoned. I could not. I knew I would betray myself if I did.

December 18th

What will be the end? What will the next few months bring? Again and again I ask myself that. This time next year, where will I be? Under what conditions will I be living? There is a two-years' calendar before me on my desk. I have just turned over to a year from to-night (Wednesday, December 18th), and marked the date and hour. A year from to-night at the same time—half-past ten—I will again write on that leaf. It is a small calendar; I will carry it wherever

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I go. There is a little comfort in knowing that it will be with me. Until the daily tearing off of the leaves brings me to that page, I will not turn to it. So when next it is before me a year will have passed, and I will *know*.

Will Horace be far away from me then, and will I be longing heart-hungrily for even the little of his companionship that I have now? Will I look back upon this night as comparatively happy, beside the utter desolation of that? Will I feel then that it would be an unspeakable joy just to know that I would see him in the morning, as I know now that I will, even though it be for only a few brief words at breakfast?

December 19th

I have seen a child beating its hands against a door in wild, impotent rage. I think that is how I now feel toward life. I am beating myself against barriers before which I am powerless; I am wearing

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out my strength, my vitality, fighting conditions that only elude and baffle me.

December 20th

I am sick, sick with strained emotions. To-day it is the sensation one has when a too-smooth-running elevator stops with a sickening lurch. There is in it, too, something of a nameless fear and terror. The lump that came spasmodically now seems permanently lodged in my throat.

I know now that the believers in the creed that mind controls the body are right. If it could be proven to me that my husband was not unfaithful, that there was no other woman in his life, I would be well, perfectly well.

Her voice haunts me constantly. Even over the telephone it was very low and soft. Somehow I have always pictured her as tall and "striking." But now I think of her as small and slight. And I know it is the type of woman, the frail,

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delicate woman, who would appeal to him most.

December 22d

*He has gone.* I do not know where, or when he will return. Last night at midnight a telegram came. There was a loud ring at the door; the maids had gone to bed, but the light still burned in his room. I heard him go downstairs. Half an hour later he knocked at my door. When I opened it he stood there with a small satchel in his hand. He was very pale.

"A telegram has just come that calls me out of town at once. I may have to be away several days. You will not be worried?"

There was something like an appeal in his voice; something that seemed to ask me to help him—to make it easier. Almost unconsciously I responded:

"No—no; I will not be worried."

Then I heard the front door close after him. I was alone. Alone—more alone than I had ever been before. Had he gone

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to her? Why had she sent for him at midnight? When would he come back? *Would he come back at all?* All the long night I wandered from room to room through that silent house. In the hall I found the yellow envelope of the telegram, but it told me nothing. It bore only the address. He had not made even a pretense of an excuse; he had not tried to say it was a business matter. He had said nothing.

December 24th

Two days and no word. I know now that nothing I suffered while he was here could equal this anguish of the unknown.

December 25th

Still no word. I am waiting quivering-ly for every sound of the bell and telephone. How strangely the holly-wreaths look in the windows across the way! Can this be Christmas?

December 27th

*He has come back.*

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### *Midnight*

How can I put the last twenty-four hours into words? Will it help me if I can?

Last night as I wandered about the house, as I have done every night since he left, I chanced to go downstairs. From under the library door shone a light. I was not frightened. I knew he was there. A great joy flooded through me. He had come back; nothing mattered but that. And then very softly I knocked at the door. There was no answer. I turned the knob. It was not locked. He was sitting before his desk, his head bowed on his folded arms. He must have heard me cross the room, but he did not look up. Gently I touched his shoulder; even then he did not move.

"Horace!" My voice rang out with a sudden fear. Then, for a moment, he raised his head. It was the face of my husband, but it was blanched and drawn almost beyond recognition.



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I groped my way from the room. For hours I sat huddled on the stairs. The only feeling of which I was clearly conscious was a longing to be near him. No sound came from the library. After a while the clock in the hall struck three—a deep, muffled sound. And again that tense stillness settled over the house.

At dawn once more I crept down to the library and opened the door. His head was still on his arms, and I knew that in all these hours he had not moved. Still without speaking I went over and knelt beside him. If he would let me stay there—if he would only let me stay! And then for the first time I noticed the bright steel of a revolver on the desk before him. With a cry of horror I caught it up. He raised his head.

“No, I have fought that all out. You need not be afraid.” And then, in a voice that was almost cold: “She died yesterday at the hospital. *The child died with her.*”

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January 16th

I am going to stay. I am going to stay because he needs me. I cannot write of these last two weeks. But I have lived them; they are past. And life can hold nothing now from which I would shrink. I believe I could walk unflinchingly on red-hot coals; that I can suffer no more.

After that night in the library he went away. He was gone five days. I do not know where. But I knew he had gone to be alone with his grief. Sometimes I pictured him by her grave. But I shall never know. We will never speak of that again. No word or reference to what has been will ever pass between us. Before he came back he sent me a letter, and I knew then it was the only statement he would ever make. The letter I destroyed, but every word is burned in my memory:

I have no explanations to make now or ever. Of my own weakness, of my unfaithfulness to you and cruelty to her, you must think what you will. I do not offer it as an excuse when

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I say that in all these years there was never any one else—that you know. She knew that too—it was all she had. I loved her. That I did not love her enough to shield her from myself, I shall suffer for as long as I live.

It sounds like mockery to say I loved you, too; and yet for you I sacrificed her. Could I have been with her through all these months I believe she would not have died. For two days before the last she was delirious, and had I never known before the strength and purity of her love for me, I would have known it then. From the beginning the fault was mine—all mine. She did not know that I was bound, until it was too late.

You may wonder why, when I have tried to keep this from you all these months, I should tell you now when it can do no good. I can only say that something stronger than any volition of my own forces me to acknowledge to you now the love that, for your sake, I tried to deny while she lived.

I expect nothing but that you will leave me. Your legal freedom is yours for the asking. Half of everything I have has been put in your name. This I did months ago. The income will be more than sufficient for your needs.

But should you feel that you could stay—

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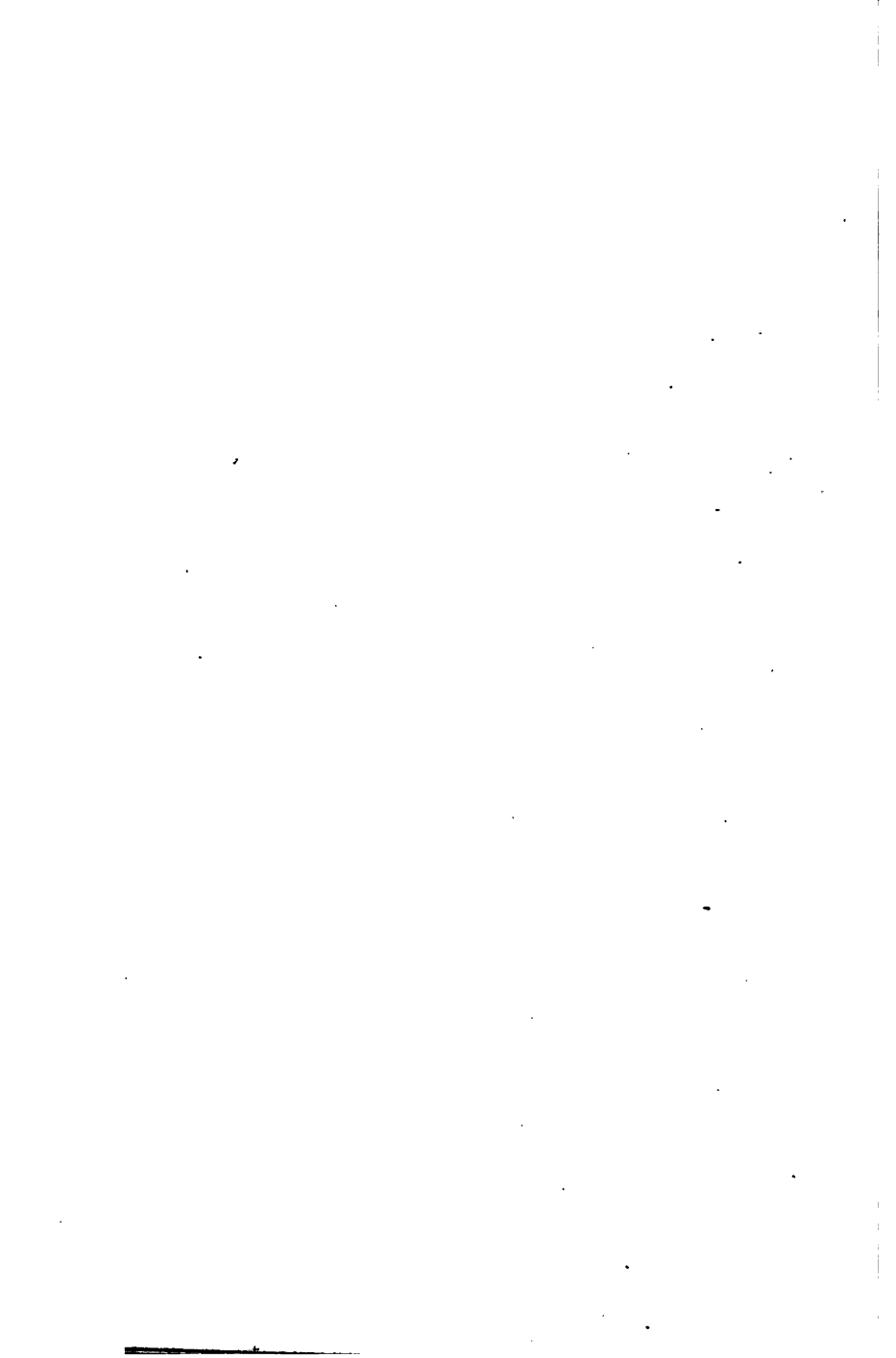
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or that some day you could come back . . .  
I have nothing to offer you except the ghost of  
our former life, and yet the future would not  
seem quite so blank if I felt that you were still  
with me. I have relinquished all right to your  
love, even to your pity. But if there is any  
hope left in me, it is the hope that you will  
stay.

**THE END**







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